CLARA MORRIS

Life on the Stage

Life on the Stage

Previous Books by
Clara Morris

The Silent Singer
Little Jim Crow

CLARA MORRIS

Life on the Stage

My Personal Experiences and Recollections

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Fifth Impression

IN memory of a labor shared,
I affectionately dedicate this
book to my husband.

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LIFE ON THE STAGE

CHAPTER FIRST

I am Born.

IF this simple tale is to be told at all, it may as well begin at the beginning and in the good old-fashioned and best of all ways — thus: Once upon a time in the Canadian city of Toronto, on the 17th of March, the sun rose bright and clear — which was a most surprising thing for the sun to do on St. Patrick's Day, but while the people were yet wondering over it the sunlight disappeared, clouds of dull gray spread themselves evenly over the sky, and then the snow fell — fell fast and furious, quickly whitening the streets and house-tops, softly lining every hollow, and was piling little cushions on top of all the hitching-posts, when the flakes grew larger, wetter, farther apart, and after a little hesitation turned to rain — a sort of walk-trot-gallop rain, which wound up with one vivid flash of lightning and a clap of thunder that fairly shook the city.

Now the Irish, being a brave people and semi-amphibious, pay no heed to wet weather. Usually all the Hibernians residing in a city divide themselves into two bodies on St. Patrick's Day, the ones who parade and the ones who follow the parade; but on this occasion they divided themselves into three bodies — the men who paraded, the men and women who followed the parade, and the Orangemen who made things pleasant for both parties.

As the out-of-time, out-of-tune band turned into a quiet cross-street to lead its following green-bannered host to

a broader one, the first brick was thrown — probably by a woman, as it hit no one, but metaphorically it knocked the chip off of the shoulder of every child of Erin. Down fell the banners, up went the fists! Orange and Green were at each other tooth and nail! Hats from prehistoric ages side by side with modern beavers scarcely fifty years old received the hurled brick-bat and went down together!

The band reached the broad avenue alone, and looked back to see the short street a-sway with struggling men, while women holding their bedraggled petticoats up, their bonnets hanging down their backs by green ribbon ties, hovered about the edges of the crowd, making predatory dashes now and then to scratch a face or rescue some precious hat from the mêlée, meanwhile inciting the men to madness by their fierce cries — and in a quiet house, in the very midst of this riot — just before the constabulary charged the crowd — I was born. I don't know, of course, whether I was really intended from the first for that house, or whether the stork became so frightened at the row in the street that he just dropped me from sheer inability to carry me any farther — anyway, I came to a house where trouble and poverty had preceded me, and, worse than both these put together — treachery.

Still, I accepted the situation with indifference. That the cupboard barely escaped absolute emptiness gave me no anxiety, as I had no teeth anyway. As a gentleman with a medicine-case in his hand was leaving the house he paused a moment for the slavey to finish washing away a pool of blood from the bottom step — and then there came that startling clap of thunder. Brand new as I was to this world and its ways, I entered my protest at once with such force and evident wrath that the doctor downstairs exclaimed: "Our young lady has temper as well as a good pair of lungs!" and went on his way laughing.

And so on that St. Patrick's Day of sunshine, snow, and rain, of riot and bloodshed, in trouble and poverty — I was born.

CHAPTER SECOND

Beginning Early, I Learn Love, Fear, and Hunger — I Become Acquainted with Letters, and Alas! I Lose One of my Two Illusions.

OF the Days of St. Patrick that followed, not one found me in the city of my birth — indeed, six months completed my period of existence in the Dominion, and I have known it no more.

Some may think it strange that I mention these early years at all, but the reason for such mention will appear later on. Looking back at them, they seem to divide themselves into groups of four years each. During the first four, my time was principally spent in growing and learning to keep out of people's way. I acquired some other knowledge, too, and little child as I was, I knew fear long before I knew the thing that frightened me. I knew that love for my mother which was to become the passion of my life, and I also knew hunger. But the fear was harder to endure than the hunger — it was so vague, yet so all-encompassing.

We had to flit so often — suddenly, noiselessly. Often I was gently roused from my sleep at night and hastily dressed — sometimes simply wrapped up without being dressed, and carried through the dark to some other place of refuge, from — what? When I went out into the main business streets I had a tormenting barège veil over my face that would not let me see half the pretty things in the shop windows, and I was quick to notice that no other little girl had a veil on. Next I remarked that if a strange lady spoke to me my mother seemed pleased — but if a man noticed me she was not pleased, and once when a big man took me by the hand and led

me to a candy store for some candy she was as white as could be and so angry she frightened me, and she promised me a severe punishment if I ever, ever went one step with a strange man again. And so my fear began to take the form of a man, of a big, smiling man — for my mother always asked, when I reported that a stranger had spoken to me, if he was big and smiling.

I had known the sensation of hunger long before I knew the word that expressed it, and I often pressed my hands over my small empty stomach, and cried and pulled at my mother's dress skirt. If there was anything at all to give I received it, but sometimes there was absolutely nothing but a drink of water to offer, which checked the gnawing for a moment or two, and at those times there was a tightening of my mother's trembling lips, and a straight up and down wrinkle between her brows, that I grew to know, and when I saw that look on her face I could not ask for anything more than "a dwink, please."

As an illustration of her almost savage pride and honesty: I one day saw a woman in front of the house buying some potatoes. I knew that potatoes cooked were very comforting to empty stomachs. One or two of them fell to the street during the measuring and I picked one up, and, fairly wild with delight, I scrambled up the stairs with it. But my mother was angry through and through.

"Who gave it to you?" she demanded.

I explained with a trembling voice: "I des' founded it on the very ground — and I'se so hungry!"

But hungry or not hungry, I had to take the potato back: "Nothing in the world could be taken without asking — that was stealing — and she was the only person in the world I had a right to ask anything of!"

It was a bitter lesson, and was rendered more so by the fact that when I carried the tear-bathed potato back to the street and laid it down, neither the woman who bought nor the man who sold was in sight — and, dear Heaven! I could almost have eaten it raw.

But I was learning obedience and self-respect; more

than that, I was already acquiring one of the necessary qualities for an actress — the power of close observation.

The next four years (the second group) were the hardest to endure of them all. True, I now had sufficient food and warmth, since my mother had given up sewing for shops — which kept us nearly always hungry — and had found other occupations. But the great object of both our lives was to be together, and there are few people who are willing to employ a woman who has with her a child. And if her services are accepted, even at a reduced salary, it is necessary for that child to be as far as possible neither seen nor heard. Therefore until I was old enough to be admitted into a public school I never knew another child — I never played with any living creature save a remarkable cat, that seemed to have claws all over her, and in my fixed determination to trace her purr and find out where it came from, she buried those claws to the very last one in my fat, investigating little hands.

Meantime my "fear" had assumed the shape and substance of a man, a man who bore a name that should have been loved and honored above all others, for this "bogey" of my baby days — this nightmare and dread — was my own father. When my mother had discovered his treachery — which had not hesitated to boldly face the very altar — she took her child and fled from him, assuming her mother's maiden name as a disguise. But go where she would, he followed and made scenes. Finally, understanding that she was not to be won back by sophistries, he offered to leave her in peace if she would give the child to him. And when that offer was indignantly rejected, he pleasantly informed her that he would make life a curse to her until she gave me up, and that by fair means or by foul he would surely obtain possession of me. Once he did kidnap me, but my mother had found friends by that time, and their pursuit was so swift and unexpected that he had to abandon me.

So, he who should have been the defender and support of my mother — whose arms should have been our shel-

ter from the world — the big, smiling French-Canadian father — became instead our terror and our dread. Therefore when my mother served in varying capacities in other people's homes, and I had to efface myself as nearly as possible, I dared not even go out to walk a little, so great was my mother's fear.

It seems odd, but in spite of my far-reaching memory, I cannot remember when I learned to read. I can recall but one tiny incident relating to the subject of learning. I stood upon a chair and while my hair was brushed and braided I spelled my words, and I had my ears boxed — a custom considered criminal in these better days — because, having successfully spelled "elephant," I came to grief over "mouse," as, according to my judgment, m-o-w-s filled all the requirements of the case. I remember, too, that the punishment made me afraid to ask what "elephant" meant; but I received the impression that it was some sort of a public building.

However, when I was six years old I joyfully betook myself to a primary school, from which I was sent home with a note, saying that "in that department they did not go beyond the 'primer,' and as this little girl reads quite well from a 'reader,' she must have been taught well at home." We were a proud yet disappointed pair, my mother and I, that day.

An odd little incident occurred about that time. One of our hurried flights had ended at a boarding house, and my extreme quietude — unnatural in a child of health and intelligence — attracted the attention of a certain boarder, who was an actress. She was very popular with the public, and both she and her husband were well liked by the people about them. She took a fancy to me, and informing herself that my mother was poor and alone, she offered to adopt me. She stated her position, her income, and her intention of educating me thoroughly. She thought a convent school would be desirable — from ten, say to seventeen.

Perhaps my mother was tempted — she was a fanatic

on the question of learning — but, oh! what a big *but* came in just then: "but when I should have, by God's will, reached the age of seventeen, she (the actress) would place me upon the stage."

"Gracious Heaven! her child on the stage!" my mother was stricken with horror! She scarcely had strength to make her shocked refusal plain enough; and when her employer ventured to remonstrate with her, pointing out the great advantage to me, she made answer: "It would be better for her to starve trying to lead a clean and honorable life, than to be exposed to such publicity and such awful temptations!"

Poor mother! the theatre was to her imagination but a beautiful vestibule leading to a place of wickedness and general wrong-doing!

During those endless months, when I had each day to sit for hours and hours in one particular chair in a corner, well out of the way — sit so long that often when I was lifted down I could not stand at all, my limbs being numbed to absolute helplessness, I had two great days to dream of, to look forward to — Christmas and that wonderful 17th of March, when because it was my birthday all those nice gentlemen, with the funny hats and green collars, walked out behind the band. And I felt particularly well disposed toward those most amusing gentlemen who wore, according to my theory at least, their little girls' aprons tied about their big waists.

I did not like so well the attendant crowd, but then I could not be selfish enough to keep people from looking at "my procession" and enjoying the music that made the blood dance in my own veins, even as my feet danced on the chill pavement.

I always received an orange on that day from my mother, and almost always a book, so it was a great event in my life, and I used to get down my little hat-box and fix the laces in my best shoes days ahead of time that I might be ready to stand on some steps where I could bow and smile to the nice gentlemen who walked

out in my honor. Heaven only knows how I got the idea that the procession was meant for me, but it made me very happy, and my heart was big with love and gratitude for those people who took so much trouble for me.

I had but two illusions in the world — Santa Claus and "my procession" — but, alas! on my eighth birthday, when in an outburst of innocent triumph and joy I cried to a grown-up: "Ain't they good — those funny gentlemen — to come and march and play music for my birthday?" I was answered with the assurance that I "was a fool — that no one knew or cared a copper about me — that it was a Saint, a dead and gone man, they marched for!"

All the dance went out of my feet, heavy tears fell fast and stood round and clear on the woolly surface of my cloak, and bending my head low to hide my disappointment, I went slowly home, where the chair seemed harder, the hours longer, and life more bare because I had lost the illusion that had brightened and glorified it.

At the present time, here in my home, there is seated in an arm-chair, a venerable doll. She is a hideous specimen of the beautiful doll of the early "fifties." She sits with her soles well turned up, facing you, her arms hanging from her shoulders in that idiotically helpless "I-give-it-up" fashion peculiar to dolls. With bulging scarlet cheeks, button-hole mouth and flat, blue staring eyes she faces Time and unwinkingly looks him down. To anyone else she is stupidity personified, but to me she speaks, for she came to me on my fourth Christmas, and she is as gifted as she is ugly. Only last birthday — as I straightened out her old, old dress skirt — she asked me if I remembered how I cried, with my face in her lap, over that first loss of an illusion — and I told her quite truly that I remembered well!

CHAPTER THIRD

I Enter a New World — I Know a New Hunger and we Return to Cleveland.

THE experiences of the first two of my third group of years have influenced my entire life. Still flying from my seemingly ubiquitous father, my mother after a desperate struggle gained enough money to pay for our journey to what was then called the "far West" — namely, the southwestern part of Illinois. Child-fashion, I was delighted at the prospect of a change, and happy over the belief that I was going to some place where I could be free to go and come like other children, without dreading the appearance of a big, smiling man from any deep doorway or from around the next corner. To tell the truth, that persistent, indestructible smile always seemed an insult added to the injury of his malicious and revengeful conduct.

Then, too, I experienced my first delicious thrill of imaginary terror. In a torn and abandoned old geography I had seen a picture labelled "Prairie." The grass was as high as a man's shoulders, and stealthily emerging from it was a sort of compound animal, neither tiger nor leopard, but with points of resemblance to both. And here every day I was listening to the grown-ups talking of "prairie lands," and how far we might have to drive across the prairie after leaving the train; and I made up my mind that I would hold our umbrella all the time, and when the uncertain beast came out I'd try to stick his eyes with it, and under cover of the confusion we would undoubtedly escape.

That being settled, I could turn all my attention to

preparations for the long journey. Dear me, I remember just where each big red rose came on the carpet-bag, and how sorry I was that the tiny brass lock came right in the side of one. It was a large bag and held a great deal, but was so arranged that whatever you wanted was always found at the bottom — whether it was the tooth-brush or a night-gown or a pair of rubbers. It had a sort of dividing wall of linen in its middle, and while one side held clothing, the other side was the commissary department. No buffet-cars then, travellers ran their own buffets, and though the things did not come into actual contact, there was not an article, big or little, in that bag that did not smell of pickles. And once when my mother had hastily attended to my needs in the miserable toilet-room of the car (no sleeper — just a sit-up-all-night affair), my clean stockings, white apron and little handkerchief all exhaled vinegar so strongly that I wrinkled up my nose, exclaiming: "I smell jes' like a pickled little girl — don't I, ma'ma?" And then, when weary and worn and dusty, we left the cars and had to drive some thirty miles, in a carriage of uncertain class, over the open prairie — then smooth and bright and green — I wearily remarked, after a time, that it was a "pretty big lawn, but where was the prairie?" for true to my plan I had secured the umbrella, and being told that I was crossing the prairie then, I was a bitterly disappointed young person. Oh, how I longed to give way to one of those passionate outbursts we so often see children indulge in! Oh, how I wanted to hurl aside the umbrella I had begged for, to fling my weary self down on the floor and cry, and cry! But I dared not — never in my whole life had I ventured on such an exhibition of temper or feeling — so I winked fast and held very still and swallowed hard at the disappointment, which was but the first of such a number of very bitter pills that I was yet to swallow.

But, thank God! if I was easily cast down, I was as easily cheered; and the prairie left behind, the sight of

the first orchard we passed, with the soft perfumed snow of the blossoms floating through the rosy sunset light, raised my spirits to an ecstasy of joy; and when our journey ended, at the rough farm-house, with my arm around the surly looking watch-dog, I stood and heard for the first time the mournful cry of the whippoorwill out in the star-pierced dark of the early May night, I thrilled with the unspoken consciousness that this was a new world that I was entering — a lovely, *lovely* world, that the grown-ups called the "country"!

For the two years I knew it the charm of that backwood life never palled. I had never seen the country before, and I found it a place of beauty and many marvels. I did not miss the fine city shops, for I never had had money to spend in them. I did not miss the people, for they had been nothing to me. And here no day that dawned failed to bring me some new experience. With what awed wonderment I faced the mystery of the springing grain. I saw the seed, hard and dry, fall into the furrowed earth and, a few days later, with gentle strength, tiny pale green spears come pricking through the brown. I learned not to look under the hickory-trees for the oak acorns that I adored. I was soon able to tell the rapidly forming furry green peaches from the smooth young apples, and I literally fell down upon my knees and worshipped before lambs, calves, and colts.

In this new, strange life everyone worked, but they worked for themselves — to use a country expression, no one "hired out." I was a very little girl. I could not spin as could my mother, who had passed her childhood in backwood life. Of course I could not weave, but I was taught to knit my own stockings — such humpy, lumpy knitting! But I was very proud of the accomplishment, even though my mother did have to "turn the heel." Then, too, I with other children at planting-time dropped corn in the sun-warmed furrows, while a man followed behind with a hoe covering it up; and when it had sprouted and was a tempting morsel for certain

black robbers of the field, I made a very active and energetic young scare-crow.

Here, too, I became acquainted with children. They were all older than I was, a hearty, healthy, wisely-ignorant lot. They knew so much about farming and so little about anything else. Not one of them could tell a story out of the Bible, and as for the "Pilgrim's Progress," they had never heard tell of it; while Bunyan only meant to them an enlarged toe-joint — not a great author.

The lack of reading matter was the one blemish on my country life. The library, composed of the Bible and the almanac, was not satisfying to my inquiring mind. One paper was taken in by the head of the family — it was a weekly, in every possible sense — but I came to watch eagerly for it, and it filled the family with amazement to see me sit down on the step and gravely wade through its dreary columns — happy if I could catch hold of some idea — some bit of news — some scrap of story; and my farmer host one day at his noon smoke removed his corn-cob pipe from his lips long enough to remark of me: "Dogorne my skin! if that young 'un ain't awake and enj'ien hersel'. Now I allers go ter sleep over that paper mysel'!" So should I — now — I presume.

These children being for-true, real children had no idea of showing courtesy or politeness to a stranger, but they had a very natural yearning to get fun out of that stranger if they could, and so they blithely led me forth to a pasture shortly after our arrival at the farm, and catching a horse they hoisted me up on to its bare, slippery back. I have learned a good bit about horses since then — have hired, borrowed, and bought them — have been to circuses and horse shows, but never since have I seen a horse of such appalling aspect. His eyes were the size of soup-plates, large clouds of smoke came from his nostrils. He had a glass-enamelled surface, and if he was one half as tall as he felt, some museum manager missed a fortune. Then the young fiends, leaving me on my slippery perch, high up near the sky, drew afar off

and stood over against the fence and gave me plenty of room — to fall off. But when I suddenly felt the world heave up beneath me, I uttered a wild shriek — clenched my hands in the animal's back hair, and, madly flinging propriety to any point of the compass that happened to be behind me, I cast one pantalet over the enamelled back, and thus astride, safely crossed the pasture — and lo! it was not I who fell, but their faces instead. When they came to take me down, somehow the animal seemed shrunken and I hesitated about leaving it, whereupon the biggest boy said I had "pluck" (I had been frightened nearly to death, but I always could be silent at the proper moment; I was silent then), and he would teach me to ride sideways, for my mother would surely punish me if I sat astride like that; and in a few weeks, thanks to him, I was the one who was oftenest trusted to take the horses to water at noon, riding sideways and always bareback, mounted on one horse and leading a second to the creek, until all had had their drink. Which habit of riding — from balance — has made me quite independent of stirrups on various occasions since those far-away days.

In the late autumn, these same children taught me where and when and how to find such treasures of the woods as hickory-nuts, chestnuts (rare there), butternuts, and pecan-nuts, while the thickets furnished hazel-nuts and the frost brought sweetness to the persimmon, and consequently pleasure to our palates, but never could I acquire a taste for the "paw-paw," that inane custard-like fruit, often called the American banana.

I helped obtain the roots and barks and nut-shells from which the grown-ups made their dyes. I learned to use a bow and arrow; and on rainy days, having nothing new to read, I learned by heart the best chapters of my own birthday books, and often repeated them to the other children when we cuddled in the hayloft, above the horses.

One day I became too realistic, and in my "flight from my step-mother's home" I fell through the hole where the hay was tossed down to old Jerry's manger. He was

a serious-minded and kindly old horse, and did nothing worse than snort a little over the change in his diet, from hay to small girl. My severe bruises would have been borne with fortitude, but when I arose — behold a wretched wandering hen had been in the manger before me, and if one judged from the state of my clothing, the egg she had left behind must have been the size of a melon at least! If that seems an exaggeration, just break an egg in your pocket, if you don't care to sit down on one, and see how far it will spread. Then, indeed, I lifted my voice and wept!

Yes, those were two precious years, in which I learned to love passionately the beauty of the world! The tender, mystic charm of dawn, the pomp and splendor of the setting of the sun! Finding in the tiny perfection of the velvety moss the minute repetition of the form and branching beauty of the stately tree at whose root it grew! Seeing all the beauty of the blue sky and its sailing clouds encompassed by a quivering drop of dew upon a mullein leaf I dimly felt some faint comprehension of the divine satisfaction when the Creator pronounced the work of His hands, "Good!"

From the first my mother had been greatly distressed by the absence of any school to which I might go, and also by her inability to earn money. She had been wise enough not to leave Cleveland without sufficient means to bring us back again — which proved most fortunate. For when quite suddenly we heard of the published death of my father, we immediately returned and she obtained employment, while I was sent to the public school. But, oh, what a poor, meagre course of study I entered on. Reading, writing, spelling, arithmetic, and geography — that was all! Only one class in the grammar-school studied history. However, improvements were being discussed, and I remember that three weeks before my final withdrawal from school my mother had to buy me a book on physiology, which was to be taught to the children, who had not even a bowing acquaintance with grammar. But

I hungered and thirsted for knowledge — I craved it — longed for it. During the weary years of repression I had fallen back upon imagination for amusement and comfort, and when I was ten my "thinks," as I then called my waking dreams, almost surely took one of these two forms. Since I had abandoned "thinks" about fairies coming to grant my wishes, I always walked out (in my best hat), and saved either an old lady or an old gentleman — sometimes one, sometimes the other — from some imminent peril — a sort of impressionist peril — vague but very terrible! and the rescued one was always tremblingly grateful and offered to reward me, and I always sternly refused to be rewarded, but unbent sufficiently to see the saved one safely to his or her splendid home. There I revelled in furniture, pictures, musical instruments and an assortment of beautiful dogs. On leaving this palatial residence I consented to give my address, and next day the "saved" called on my mother and after some conversation it was settled that I was to go to the convent-school for four years, where I knew the education was generous and thorough, and that languages, music, and painting were all taught. As these "thinks" took place at night after the ill-smelling extinguishment of the candle, I generally fell asleep before, in white robe and a crown of flowers, I gathered up all the prizes and diplomas and things I had earned.

When my mother in the performance of her duties had to accept orders, she received them calmly and as a matter of course — whatever she may have felt in her heart — but I loved and reverenced her so! To me she was the one woman of the world; and when I saw her taking orders from another I flinched and shrank as I would have done beneath the sharp lash of a whip, and then for nights afterward (so soon as I had released my nose, tightly pinched to keep out the smell of candle-smoke), I settled down, with my mother's hand tight clasped in mine, to my other favorite "thinks" wherein I did some truly remarkable embroidery, of such pre-

cision of stitch, such perfection of coloring and shading, that when I offered it for sale I was much embarrassed by the numbers of would-be buyers. However, an old lady finally won me away from the store (that old lady was bound to appear in all my "thinks"), and I had to be very firm with her to keep her from over-paying me for the work of my hands.

Then, as I had graciously promised the store-keeper any over-plus of embroidery not needed by the generous old person, I felt my income secure, and hastened to rent two rooms and furnish them, ready to take my astonished mother there — where she could do the ordering herself.

I hung curtains, laid carpets, put dishes in the cupboard, gave one window to my mother and kept one for myself and my very exceptional embroidery; and, though I laugh now, I had then many an hour of genuine happiness, furnishing this imaginary home and refuge for the mother I loved!

CHAPTER FOURTH

I am Led into the Theatre—I Attend Rehearsals—I am Made Acquainted with the Vagaries of Tights.

I WAS approaching my thirteenth birthday when it came about that a certain ancient boarding-house keeper — far gone in years —required someone to assist her, someone she could trust entirely and leave in charge for a month at a time; and I, not being able to read the future, was greatly chagrined because my mother accepted the offered situation. I was always happiest when she found occupation in a house where there was a library, for people were generally kind to me in that respect and gave me the freedom of their shelves, seeing that I was reverently careful of all books; but in a boarding-house there would be no library, and my heart sank as we entered the gloomy old building.

No, there were no books, but among the boarders there were two or three actors and two actresses — a mother and a daughter. The mother played the "first old women"; the daughter, only a year or two older than I was, played, I was told, "walking-ladies," though what that meant I could not imagine.

The daughter (Blanche) liked me, while I looked upon her with awe, and wondered why she even noticed me. She was very wilful, she would not study anything on earth save her short parts. She had never read a book in her life. When I was home from school I told her stories by the hour, and she would say: "You ought to be in a theatre — you could act!"

And then I would be dumb for a long time, because I thought she was making fun of me. One day I was chewing some gum she gave me — I was not chewing it very

nicely, either — and my mother boxed my ears, and Blanche said: "You ought to be in a theatre — you could chew all the gum you liked there!"

And just then my mother was so cruelly overworked, and the spring came in with furious heat, and I felt so big and yet so helpless — a great girl of thirteen to be worked for by another — and the humiliation seemed more than I could bear, and I locked myself in our dreary cupboard of a room, and flung myself upon my knees, and in a passion of tears tried to make a bargain with my God! I meant no irreverence — I was intensely religious. I did not see the enormity of the act — I only knew that I suffered, and that God could help me — so I asked His help! But, instead of stopping there, I cried out to Him this promise: "Dear God! just pity me and show me what to do! Please — please help me to help my mother — and if you will, I'll never say 'No!' to any woman who comes to me all my life long!"

My error in trying to barter with my Maker must have been forgiven, for my prayer was answered within a week, while there are many women scattered through the land who know that I have tried faithfully to keep my part of that bargain, and no woman who has sought my aid has ever been answered with a "No!"

One day Blanche greeted me with the news that extra ballet-girls were wanted, and told me that I must go at once and get engaged.

"But," I said, "maybe they won't take me!"

"Well," answered she, "I've coaxed your mother, and my mother says she'll look out for you — so at any rate go and see. I'll take you to-morrow."

And so dimly, vaguely, I seemed to see a way opening out before me, and again behind the locked door I knelt and said: "Dear God! dear God!" and got no further, because grief has many words and joy has so few.

The school term had closed on Friday, and on Saturday morning, with my heart beating almost to suffocation, I started out to walk to the theatre with Blanche, who had

promised to ask Mr. Ellsler (the manager) to take me on in the ballet. When we reached the sidewalk we saw the sky threatened rain and Blanche sent me back for an umbrella. I had none of my own, so I borrowed one from Mrs. Miller (our landlady), and at sight of it my companion broke into laughter. It was a dreadful affair — with a knobby, unkind handle, a slovenly and corpulent body, and a circumference, when open, that suggested the idea that it had been built to shelter not only the landlady, but those wise ones of the boarders who had paid up before the winds rose and the rain fell. Then we proceeded to the old Academy of Music on Bank Street, and entering, went upstairs, and just as we reached the top step a small dark man hurried across the hall and Blanche called quickly: "Oh, Mr. Ellsler — Mr. Ellsler! wait a moment, please — I want to speak to you!"

I could not know that his almost repellent sternness of face concealed a kindness of heart that approached weakness, so when he turned a frowning, impatient face toward us, hope left me utterly, and for a moment I seemed to stand in a great darkness. I think I can do no better than to give Mr. Ellsler's own account of that, our first meeting, as he has given it often since. He says: "I was much put out by a business matter and was hastily crossing the corridor when Blanche called me, and I saw she had another girl in tow; a girl whose appearance in a theatre was so droll I must have laughed, had I not been more than a little cross. Her dress was quite short — she wore a pale-blue apron buttoned up the back, long braids tied at the ends with ribbon, and a brown straw hat, while she clutched desperately at the handle of the biggest umbrella I ever saw. Her eyes were distinctly blue and were plainly big with fright. Blanche gave her name and said she wanted to go on in the ballet, and I instantly answered she would not do, she was too small — I wanted women, not children, and started to return to my office. Blanche was voluble, but the girl herself never spoke a single word. I glanced toward her and stopped.

The hands that clutched the umbrella trembled — she raised her eyes and looked at me. I had noticed their blueness a moment before — now they were almost black, so swiftly had the pupils dilated, and slowly the tears rose in them. All the father in me shrank under the child's bitter disappointment; all the actor in me thrilled at the power of expression in the girl's face, and I hastily added: 'Oh, well! You may come back in a day or two, and if anyone appears meantime who is short enough to march with you I'll take you on,' and after I got to my office I remembered the girl had not spoken a single word, but had won an engagement — for I knew I should engage her — with a pair of tear-filled eyes."

The following Tuesday, under the protection of the ever-faithful Blanche, I again presented myself and was engaged for the term of two weeks, to go on the stage in the marches and dances of a play called "The Seven Sisters," for which service I was to receive three dollars a week, or fifty cents a night, as there were no matinées then, and so I entered, with wide-astonished eyes, into that dim, dusty, chaotic place known as "behind the scenes" — a strange place, where nothing *is* and everything *may be.*

In the daytime I found the stage a thing dead — at night, with the blazing of the gas, it lived! for light is its life, music is its soul, and the play its brain.

Silently and cautiously I walked about, gazing curiously at the "scenes," so fine on one side, so bare and cheap on the other; at the tarlatan "glass windows"; at the green "calico sea," lying flat and waveless on the floor. Everything there pretended to be something else, and at last I said solemnly to Blanche: "Is everything only make-believe in a theatre?"

And she turned her gum to the other side and answered: "Yes, everything's make-believe — except salary day!"

Then came the rehearsal — everything was military just then — and there was a Zouave drill to learn, as well as a couple of dances. The women and girls who had

been engaged were not the very nicest people in the world, though they were the best to be found at such short notice; and Mrs. Bradshaw told me not to stand about with them, but to come to her as soon as my share in the work was over. "But," said this wise woman, "don't fail in politeness to them; for nothing can hold a person so far off as extreme politeness."

To me the manual of arms was mere child's play, and the drill a veritable delight. The second day I scribbled down the movements in the order that they had been made, and learned them by heart, with the result that on the third day I sat aside chewing gum, while the stage-manager raved over the rest. Then the star — Mr. McDonough — came along and furiously demanded to know why I was not drilling. "The gentleman sent me out of the ranks, sir," I answered, "because he said I knew the manual and drill!"

"Oh, indeed! well, there's not one of you that knows it — and you never will know it! You're a set of numbskulls! Here!" he cried, catching up a rifle, "take hold of this — get up here — and let's see how much you know! Now, then, shoulder arms!"

And standing alone — burning with blushes, blinded with tears of mortification — I was put through my paces with a vengeance; but I really knew the manual as thoroughly as I knew the drill, and when it was over Mr. McDonough took the rifle from me, and exclaimed: "Well, saucer-eyes, you do know it! I'm d—d if you don't! and I'm sorry, little girl, I spoke so roughly to you!"

He held out his fat white hand to me, and as I took it he added: "You ought to stay in this business — you've got your head with you!"

It was a small matter, of course, but there was a faint hint of triumph in it, and the savor was very pleasant to me.

Naturally, with a salary of but three dollars a week, we turned to the management for our costumes. I wonder

what the *danseuse* of to-day would think of the costume worn by her sister of the "sixties"? Now her few gauzy limb-betraying skirts reach but to the middle of the thigh; her scrap of a bodice, cut far below the shoulder-blades at the back, being absolutely sleeveless, is precariously held in place by a string or two of beads. To be sure, she is apt to wear a collar of blazing diamonds, instead of the simple band of black velvet that used to be sufficient ornament for the peerless Bonfanti and the beautiful and modest Betty Rigl, who in their graceful ignorance of "splits" and athletic "tours de force," managed in their voluminous and knee-long skirts to whirl, to glide, to poise and float, to show, in fact, the poetry of motion.

But we, this untrained ballet, were not Bonfantis nor Morlachis, and we wore our dancing clothes with a difference. In one dance we were supposed to be fairies. We wore flesh-colored slippers and tights. It took one full week of our two weeks' engagement to learn how to secure these treacherous articles, so that they would remain smooth and not wrinkle down somewhere or twist about. One girl never learned, and to the last added to the happiness of the public by ambling about on a pair of legs that looked as if they had been done up in curl papers the night before.

We each had seven white tarlatan skirts, as full as they could be gathered — long enough to come a little below the knee. Our waists were also flesh-colored, and were cut fully two or three inches below our collar-bones, so you see there was plenty of cloth at our backs to hook our very immature wings to. We had wreaths of white roses on our heads — Blanche, who was very frank, said they looked like wreaths of turnips — and garlands of white roses to wave in the dance. I remember the girl with the curled legs was loathed by all because she lassoed everyone she came near with her garland — so you see we were very decorous fairies, whether we were decorative or not.

Of course we were rather substantial, and our wings did seem too thin and small to sustain us satisfactorily. One girl took hers off in the dressing-room and remarked contemptuously that "they couldn't lift her cat even!"

But another, who was dictatorial and also of a suspicious nature, answered savagely: "You don't know nothing about wings — and you haven't got no cat, nohow, and you know it — so shut up!" and the conversation closed.

In our second costume we were frankly human. We still wore dancing skirts, but we were in colors, and we had, of course, shed our wings — nasty, scratchy things they were, I remember. Then for the drill and march we wore the regular Fire Zouave uniform.

It was all great fun for me — you remember I was not stage-struck. Dramatically speaking, I was not yet born — I had neither ambition nor fear — I was simply happy because I was going to earn that, to me, great sum of money, and was going to give it to my mother, and planned only what I should say to her, and had no thought at all of the theatre or anything or any person in it.

The donning of fleshings for the first time is an occasion of anxiety to anyone, man or woman. I, however, approached the subject of tights with an open mind, and Blanche freely gave me both information and advice. She chilled my blood by describing the mortifying mishaps, the dread disasters these garments had brought to those who failed to understand them. She declared them to be tricky, unreliable, and malicious in the extreme.

"There's just one way to succeed with 'em," she said, "and that's by bullying 'em. Show you're afraid and they will slip and twist and wrinkle down and make you a perfect laughing-stock. You must take your time, you know, at first, and fit 'em on very carefully and smoothly over your feet and ankles and up over your knees. See that they are nice and straight or you'll look as if you were walking on corkscrews, but after that bully 'em — yank and pull and drag 'em, and when you have 'em drawn

up as tight as you can draw 'em, go at 'em and pull 'em up another inch at least. They'll creak and snap and pretend they're going to tear, but don't you ever leave your dressing-room satisfied, unless you feel you can't possibly get down-stairs without going sideways."

"But," I remonstrated, "they'll break and let my knees through!"

"Oh, no they won't!" she cheerfully answered. "They'll make believe they're going to split at the knee, of course, but instead they'll just keep as safe and smooth as the skin on your arm. But, for Heaven's sake, don't be afraid of 'em!"

And I gravely promised to be as bold as I possibly could in my first encounter with the flesh-colored terrors.

CHAPTER FIFTH

I Receive my First Salary — I am Engaged for the Coming Season.

AT last the night came. Hot? Oh, my, hot it was! and we were so crowded in our tiny dressing-room that some of us had to stand on the one chair while we put our skirts on. The confusion was great, and I was glad to get out of the room, down-stairs, where I went to show myself to Mrs. Bradshaw or Blanche, to see if I was all right. They looked at me, and after a hopeless struggle with their quivering faces they burst into shrieks of laughter. With trembling hands I clutched my tarlatan skirts and peering down at my tights, I groaned: "Are they twisted, or run down, or what?"

But it was not the tights, it was my face. I knew you had to put on powder because the gas made you yellow, and red because powder made you ghastly, but it had not occurred to me that skill was required in applying the same, and I was a sight to make any kindly disposed angel weep! I had not even sense enough to free my eyelashes from the powder clinging to them. My face was chalk white and low down on my cheeks were nice round bright red spots.

Mrs. Bradshaw said: "With your round blue eyes and your round white-and-red face, you look like a cheap china doll! Come here, my dear!"

She dusted off a few thicknesses of the powder, removed the hard scarlet spots, took a great soft hare's foot, which she rubbed over some pink rouge, and then holding it in the air she proceeded: "To-morrow, after you have walked to get a color, go to your glass and see where that color shows itself. I think you will find it high on your cheek, coming up close under the eye and grow-

ing fainter toward the ear. I'll paint you that way tonight on chance. You see *my* color is low on my cheek. Of course when you are making-up for a character part you go by a different rule, but when you are just trying to look pretty be guided by nature. Now——"

I felt the soft touch of the hare's foot on my burning cheeks; then she gave me a tooth-brush, which had black on it, and bade me draw it across my lashes. I did so and was surprised at the amount of powder it removed. She touched her little finger to some red pomade, and said: "Thrust out your under lip — no, not like a kiss — that makes creases — make a sulky lip — so!"

She touched my lip with her finger, then she drew back and laughed again, in a different way. She drew me to the glass, and said, "Look!"

I looked and cried: "Oh — oh! Mrs. Bradshaw, that girl doesn't look a bit like me — she's ever so much nicer!"

In that lesson on making-up was the beginning and the ending of my theatrical instruction. What I have learned since then has been by observation, study, and direct inquiry — but never by instruction, either free or paid for.

Now, while I was engaged to go on with the crowd, fate willed after all that I should have an independent entrance for my first appearance on the stage. The matter would be too trivial to mention were it not for the influence it had upon my future. One act of the play represented the back of a stage during a performance. The scenes were turned around with their unpainted sides to the public. The scene-shifters and gas-men were standing about — everything was going wrong. The manager was giving orders wildly, and then a dancer was late. She was called frantically and finally when she appeared on the run, the manager caught her by the shoulders, rushed her across the stage and fairly pitched her on the imaginary stage — to the great amusement of the audience.

The tallest and prettiest girl in the ballet had been picked out to do this bit of work, and she had been rehearsed and rehearsed as if she were preparing for the balcony scene of "Romeo and Juliet"; and day after day the stage-manager would groan: "Can't you run? Did you never run? Imagine the house a-fire and that you are running for your life!"

At last, on that opening night, we were all gathered ready for our first entrance and dance, which followed a few moments after the incident I have described. The tall girl had a queer look on her face as she stood in her place — her cue came, but she never moved.

I heard the rushing footsteps of the stage-manager: "That's you!" he shouted; "go on! go on, run!"

Run? She seemed to have grown fast to the floor. We heard the angry *aside* of the actor on the stage: "Send someone on here — for Heaven's sake!"

"Are you going on?" cried the frantic prompter.

She dropped her arms limply at her sides and whispered: "I — I — c-a-n-t!"

He turned, and as he ran his imploring eye over the line of faces, each girl shrank back from it. He reached me — I had no fear, and he saw it. "Can you go on there?" he cried. I nodded. "Then for God's sake go!"

I gave a bound and a rush that carried me half across the stage before the manager caught me — and so I made my entrance on the stage, and danced and marched and sang with the rest, and all unconsciously took my first step upon the path that I was to follow through shadow and through sunshine — to follow by steep and stony places, over threatening bogs, through green and pleasant meadows — to follow steadily and faithfully for many and many a year to come.

On our first salary day, to the surprise of all concerned, I did not go to claim my week's pay. To everyone who spoke to me of the matter, I simply answered: "Oh, that will be all right." When the second day came I was

the last to present myself at the box-office window. Mr. Ellsler was there and he opened the door and asked me to come in. As I signed my name on the salary list I hesitated perceptibly and he laughingly said: "Don't you know your own name?" Now on the first day of all, when the stage-manager had taken down our names, I had been gazing at the scenery and when he called out: "Little girl, what is your name?" I had not heard, and someone standing by had said: "Her name is Clara — Clara Morris, or Morrisey, or Morrison, or something like that," and he dropped the last syllable from my name Morrison, and wrote me down Morris; so when Mr. Ellsler put his question, "Don't you know your name?" that was certainly the moment when I should have spoken — but I was too shy, and there and thereafter held my peace, and have been in consequence Clara Morris ever since.

I having signed for and received my two weeks' salary, Mr. Ellsler asked why I had not come the week before, and I told him I preferred to wait because it would seem so much more if I got both weeks' salary all at one time. And he gravely nodded and said "it was rather a large sum to have in hand at one time" — and, though I was very sensitive to ridicule, I did not suspect him of making fun of me.

Then he said: "You are a very intelligent little girl, and when you went on alone and unrehearsed the other night you proved you had both adaptability and courage. I'd like to keep you in the theatre. Will you come and be a regular member of the company for the season that begins in September next?"

I think it must have been my ears that finally stopped my ever-widening smile while I made answer that I must ask my mother first.

"To be sure," said he, "to be sure! Well, suppose you ask her, then, and let me know whether you can or not."

Looking back and speaking calmly, I must admit

that I do not now believe that Mr. Ellsler's financial future depended entirely upon the yes or no of my mother and myself; but that I was on an errand of life or death everyone must have thought who saw me tearing through the streets on that 90-in-the-shade summer day, racing along in a whirl of short skirts, with the boyish, self-kicking gait peculiar to running girls of thirteen.

One man, a tailor, ran out hatless and coatless and looked up the street anxiously in the direction from which I came. A big boy on the corner yelled after me: "S-a-a-y, Sis, where's the fire?" but you see they did not know that I was carrying home my first earnings — that I was clutching six damp one-dollar bills in the hands that had been so empty all my life! Poor little hands that had never held a greater sum than one big Canadian penny, that had never held a dollar bill till they had first earned it. But if the boy was blind to what I held, so was I blind to what the future held — which made us equal.

I had meant to take off my hat and smooth my hair, and in a decorous and proper manner approach my mother and deliver my nice little speech, and then hand her the money. But, alas! as I rushed into the house I came upon her unexpectedly — for, fearing dinner was going to be late, she was hurrying things by shelling a great basket of peas as she sat by the dining-room window. At sight of her tired face, all my nicely planned speech disappeared. I flung my arm about her neck, dropped the bills on top of the empty pods, and cried with beautiful lucidity: "Oh, mother! that's mine — and it's all yours!"

She kissed me, but to my grieved amazement put the money back into my hand, folding my four stiff, unwilling fingers over it, as she said: "No, you have earned this money yourself — you are the only one who has the right to use it — you are to do with it exactly as you please."

And while tears of disappointment were yet swimming in my eyes, triumph sprang up in my heart at her last words; for if I could do exactly as I pleased, why, after all, she should have the new summer dress she needed so badly. So I took the money to our room, and having secreted it in the most intricate and involved manner I could think of, I returned and laid Mr. Ellsler's offer before my mother, who at first hesitated, but learning that Mrs. Bradshaw was engaged for another season, she finally consented, and I rushed back to the theatre, where, red and hot and out of breath, I was engaged for the ballet for the next season. After this I was conscious of a new feeling, which I would have found it very hard to explain then. It was not importance, it was not vanity, it was a pleasant feeling, it lifted the head and gave one patience to bear calmly many things that had been very hard to bear. I know now it was the self-respect that comes to everyone who is a breadwinner.

Directly after breakfast next day I was off to get my mother's dress. I went quite alone, and my head was well in the air; for this was indeed an important occasion. I looked long and felt gravely at the edges of the goods, I did not know what for, but I had seen other people do it, and when my lavender-flowered muslin was cut off, done up and paid for, I found quite a large hole in my six dollars; for it was war time, and anything made of cotton cost a dreadful price. But, good Heaven! how happy I was, and how proud that I should get a dress for my mother, instead of her getting one for me! Undoubtedly, had there been a fire just then, I would have risked my life to save that flowered muslin gown.

I had not been more than two or three days in the theatre when I discovered that its people seemed to be divided into two distinct parties — the guyers and the guyed — those who laughed and those who were laughed at. All my life I have had a horror of practical joking, and I very quickly decided I would not be among the

guyed. I had borrowed many of Mrs. Bradshaw's play books to read, and often found in the directions for costumes the old word "ibid." "Count Rudolph — black velvet doublet, hose and short cloak. Count Adolph, ibid." So when the property-man, an incorrigible joker, asked me to go home and borrow Mrs. Bradshaw's ibid for him, I simply looked at him and smiled a broad, silent smile and never moved a peg. He gave me a sharp look, then affecting great anger at my laziness, he wrote a request for an ibid and gave it to the fattest girl in the crowd, and she carried it to Mrs. Bradshaw, who wrote on it that her ibid was at Mrs. Dickson's, and the fat girl went to Mrs. Dickson's, who said she had lent it to Mr. Lewis — so the poor fat goose was kept waddling through the heat, from one place to another, until she was half dead, to the great enjoyment of the property-man.

Next day he was very busy, when, glancing up, he saw me looking on at his work. Instantly he caught up a bottle, and said: "Run upstairs to the paint-frame (three flights up) and ask the painter to put a little ad-libitum in this bottle for me — there's a good girl!"

Now I did not yet know what ad-libitum meant, but I was a very close observer, and I saw the same malicious twinkle in his eye that had shone there when he had sent the fat girl on her hot journey, and once more I slowly chewed my gum, and smiled my wide, unbelieving smile. He waited a moment, but as I did not touch the bottle he tossed it aside, saying: "What a suspicious little devil you are!"

But when a man wanted me to blow down a gun-barrel next morning, the property-man exclaimed: "Here, you! let saucer-eyes alone! I don't know whether she gets her *savey* out of her head or chews it out of her gum, but she don't guy worth a cent, so you needn't try to put anything on to her!"

And from that day to this I have been free from the attacks of the practical joker.

CHAPTER SIXTH

The Regular Season Opens — I have a Small Part to Play — I am among Lovers of Shakespeare — I too Stand at his Knee and Fall under the Charm.

UP to this time the only world I had known had been narrow and sordid and lay chill under the shadow of poverty; and it is sunlight that makes the earth smile into flower and fruit and laugh aloud through the throats of birds. But now, standing humbly at the knee of Shakespeare, I began to learn something of another world — fairy-like in fascination, marvellous in reality. A world of sunny days and jewelled nights, of splendid palaces, caves of horror, forests of mystery, and meadows of smiling candor. All peopled, too, with such soldiers, statesmen, lovers, clowns, such women of splendid chill chastity, fierce ambition, thistle-down lightness, and burning, tragic love as made the heart beat fast to think of.

Perhaps if I had attempted simply to read Shakespeare at that time, I might have fallen short both in profit and in pleasure; but it was the *hearing* him that roused my attention. There was such music in the sound of the words, that the mind was impelled to study out their meaning. It seems to me that a human voice is to poetry what a clear even light is to a reader, making each word give up its full store of meaning.

At that time Forrest, crowned and wrapped in royal robes, was yet tottering on his throne. Charlotte Cushman was the Tragic Queen of the stage. Mr. James Murdoch, frail and aging, but still acting, was highly esteemed. Joseph Jefferson, E. L. Davenport, J. K. Hackett, Edwin Adams, John E. Owens, Dan. Setchell, Peter Richings and his daughter Caroline, Mrs. D. P. Bowers, Miss

Lucille Western, Miss Maggie Mitchell, Mr. and Mrs. Conway, Matilda Heron, Charles Couldock, Joseph Proctor, Mr. and Mrs. Albaugh, Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams, the Webb Sisters, Kate Reynolds, were all great favorites, not pausing to mention many more, while Edwin Booth, the greatest light of all, was rising in golden glory in the East.

Of the above-mentioned twenty-eight stars, eighteen acted in Shakespeare's plays. All stars played a week's engagement — many played two weeks, therefore at least twenty-four of our forty-two week season was given over to Shakespearean productions, and every actor and actress had the Bard at their tongue's tip.

In the far past the great disgrace of our profession was the inebriety of its men. At the time I write of, the severity of the managers had nearly eradicated the terrible habit, and I never saw but two of that class of brilliant actor-drunkards, beloved of newspaper story writers, who made too much of their absurd vagaries.

Looking back to the actors of '65, I can't help noticing the difference between their attitude of mind toward their profession, and that of the actor of to-day. Salaries were much smaller then, work was harder, but life was simpler. The actor had no social standing; he was no longer looked down upon, but he was an unknown quantity; he was, in short, an actor pure and simple. He had enthusiasm for his profession — he lived to act, not merely living by acting. He had more superstition than religion, and no politics at all; but he was patriotic and shouldered his gun and marched away in the ranks as cheerfully as any other citizen soldier.

But above all and beyond all else, the men and women *respected* their chosen profession. Their constant association of mind with Shakespeare seemed to have given them a certain dignity of bearing as well as of speech.

To-day our actors have in many cases won some social recognition, and they must therefore give a portion of their time to social duties. They are clubmen and another

portion of their time goes in club lounging. They draw large salaries and too frequently they have to act in long running plays, that are made up of smartish wit and cheapest cynicism — mere froth and frivolity, while the effective smashing of the Seventh Commandment has been for so long a time the principal *motif* of both drama and farce, that one cannot wonder much at the general tone of flippancy prevailing among the theatrical people of to-day. They guy everything and everybody, and would jeer at their profession as readily as they would at an old man on the street wearing a last year's hat.

They are sober, they are honest, they are generous, but they seem to have grown utterly flippant, and I can't help wondering if this alteration can have come about through the change in their mental pabulum.

At all events, as I watched and listened in the old days, it seemed to me they were never weary of discussing readings, expressions, emphasis, and action. One would remark, say at a rehearsal of "Hamlet," that Macready gave a certain line in this manner, and another would instantly express a preference for a Forrest — or a Davenport — rendering, and then the argument would be on, and only a call to the stage would end the weighing of words, the placing of commas, etc.

I well remember my first step into theatrical controversy. "Macbeth" was being rehearsed, and the star had just exclaimed: "Hang out our banners on the outward walls!" That was enough — argument was on. It grew animated. Some were for: "Hang out our banners! on the outward walls the cry is still: they come!" while one or two were with the star's reading.

I stood listening and looking on and fairly sizzling with hot desire to speak, but dared not take the liberty, I stood in such awe of my elders. Presently the "old-man" turned and, noticing my eagerness, laughingly said: "Well, what is it, Clara? you'll have a fit if you don't ease your mind with speech."

"Oh, Uncle Dick," I answered, my words fairly trip-

ping over each other in my haste. "I have a picture home, I cut it out of a paper, it's a picture of a great castle, with towers and moats and things, and on the outer walls there are men with spears and shields, and they seem to be looking for the enemy, and, Uncle Dick, the *banner* is floating over the high tower!"

"Where it ought to be," interpolated the old gentleman, who was English.

"So," I went on, "don't you think it ought to be read: 'Hang out our banners! on the outward walls' — the outward walls, you know, is where the lookout are standing — 'the cry — is still, they come!'"

A general laugh followed my excited explanation, but Uncle Dick patted me very kindly on the shoulder, and said: "Good girl! you stick to your picture — it's right and so are you. Many people read the line that way, but you have worked it out for yourself, and that's a good plan to follow."

And I swelled and swelled, it seemed to me, I was so proud of the gentle old man's approval. But that same night I came quite wofully to grief. I had been one of the crowd of "witches"; I had also had my place at that shameless *papier-maché* banquet given by *Macbeth* to his tantalized guests, and then, being off duty, was, as usual, planted in the entrance, watching the acting of the grown-up and the grown-great. *Lady Macbeth* was giving the sleep-walking scene. Her method was of the old, old school. She spoke at almost the full power of her lungs, throughout that mysterious, awe-inspiring sleep-walking scene. It jarred upon my feelings — I could not have told why, but it did. I believed myself alone, and when the memory-haunted woman roared out: "Yet, who would have thought the old man to have had so much *blood* in him?" I remarked, *sotto voce:* "Did you expect to find ink in him?"

A sharp "ahem!" right at my shoulder told me I had been overheard, and I turned to face — oh, horror! the stage-manager. He glared angrily at me, and began:

"Since when have the ladies of the ballet taken to criticising the work of the stars?"

Humbly enough, I said: "I beg your pardon, sir, I was just talking to myself, that was all."

But he went on: "Oh, you would not criticize a reading, unless you could better it — so pray favor us with *your* ideas on this speech!"

Each sneering word cut me to the heart. Tears filled my eyes. I struggled hard to keep them from falling, while I just murmured: "I beg your pardon!" Again he demanded my reading, saying they were not "too old to learn," and in sheer desperation, I exclaimed: "I was only speaking to myself, but I thought *Lady Macbeth* was amazed at the *quantity* of blood that flowed from the body of such an old man — for when you get old, you know, sir, you don't have so much blood as you used to, and I only just thought, that as the 'sleeping men were laced,' and the knives 'smeared,' and her hands 'bathed' with it, she might have perhaps whispered: 'Yet, who would have thought the old man to have had *so much* blood in him?' I didn't mean an impertinence!" and down fell the tears, for I could not talk and hold them back at the same time.

He looked at me in dead silence for a few moments, then he said: "Humph!" and walked away, while I rushed to the dressing-room and cried and cried, and vowed that never, never again would I talk to myself — in the theatre at all events. I mention these incidents to show how quickly I came under the influence of these Shakespeare-studying men and women, some of whom had received their very adequate education from him alone.

It was odd to hear how they used his words and expressions in their daily conversation. 'Twas not so much quoting him intentionally, as it was an unconscious incorporation into their own language of Shakespeare's lines.

Tramps were to them almost always "vagrom men." When one did some very foolish thing, he almost surely begged to be "written down an ass." The appearance of

a pretty actress in her new spring or fall gown was as surely hailed with: "The riches of the ship have come on shore!"

I saw a pet dog break for the third time from restraint to follow his master, who put his hand on the animal's head and rather worriedly remarked: "'The love that follows us sometimes is our trouble — which still'" (with a big sigh) "'we thank as love!' But you'll have to go back, old fellow, all the same." If someone obliged you, and you expressed the fear that you had given him trouble, he would be absolutely certain to reply, pleasantly and quite honestly: "The labor we delight in physics pain!" And so on and on unendingly. And I almost believe that had an old actor seen these three great speeches: The "seven ages" of man, "To be or not to be!" and "Othello's occupation's gone," grouped together, he would have fallen upon his knees and become an idolator there and then.

Yes, I found them odd people, but I liked them. The world was brightening for me, and I felt I had a right to my share of the air and light, and as much of God's earth as my feet could stand upon.

I had had a little part entrusted to me, too, the very first week of the season. A young backwoods-boy, Tom Bruce, by name, and I had borrowed some clothes and had slammed about with my gun, and spoken my few words out loud and clear, and had met with approving looks, if not words, but not yet was the actress aroused in me, I was still a mere school-girl reciting her lessons. My proudest moment had been when I was allowed to go on for the longest witch in the cauldron scene in "Macbeth." Perhaps I might have come to grief over it had I not overheard the leading man say: "That child will never speak those lines in the world!" and the leading man was six feet tall and handsome, and I was thirteen and a half years old, and had to be called a "child!"

I was in a secret rage, and I went over and over my lines, at all hours, under all kinds of circumstances, so that

nothing should be able to frighten me at night. And then, with my paste-board crown and white sheet and petticoat, I boiled-up in the cauldron and gave my lines well enough for the manager (who was *Hecate* just then) to say low, "Good! Good!" and the leading man next night asked me to take care of his watch and chain during his combat scene, and my pride of bearing was most unseemly, and the other ballet-girls loved me not at all, for you see they, too, knew he was six feet tall and handsome.

CHAPTER SEVENTH

I find I am in a "Family Theatre" — I Fare Forth away from my Mother, and in Columbus I Shelter under the wing of Mrs. Bradshaw.

THIS theatre in which I found myself was, in professional parlance, a family theatre, a thing abhorred by many, especially by actresses. Not much wonder either, for even as the green bay tree flourisheth in the psalm, so does nepotism flourish in the family theatre; and when it's a case of the managerial *Monsieur, Madame, et Bébés* all acting, many are the tears, sobs, and hot words that follow upon the absorption by these three of all the good parts, while all the poor ones are placed with strictest justice where they belong. At that time men and women were engaged each for a special "line of business," and to ask anyone to act outside of his "line" was an offence not lightly passed over.

For the benefit of those who may not be familiar with theatrical terms of procedure, I will state that a company was generally made up of a leading man (heroes, of course), first old man, second old man, heavy man, first comedian, second comedian, juvenile man, walking gentleman, and utility man.

That term, "heavy man," of course had no reference to the actor's physical condition, but it generally implied a deep voice, heavy eyebrows, and a perfect willingness to stab in the back or smilingly to poison the wine of the noblest hero or the fairest heroine in the business; so the professional player of villains was a heavy man.

The juvenile man may have left juvenility far, far behind him in reality, but if his back was flat, his eyes large

and hair good; he would support old mothers, be falsely accused of thefts, and win wealthy sweethearts in last acts, with great *éclat* — as juvenile men were expected to do.

Walking gentlemen didn't walk all the time; truth to tell, they stood about and pretended a deep interest in other people's affairs, most of the time. They were those absent Pauls or Georges that are talked about continually by sweethearts or friends or irate fathers, and finally appear just at the end of everything, simply to prove they really do exist, and to hold a lady's hand, while the curtain falls on the characters, all nicely lined up and bowing like toy mandarins.

The utility man was generally not a man, but a large, gloomy boy, whose mustache would not grow, and whose voice would crack over the few lines he was invited to address to the public. He sometimes led mobs, but more often made brief statements as to the whereabouts of certain carriages — and therein laid his claim to utility.

Then came the leading lady, the first old woman (who was sometimes the heavy woman), the first singing soubrette, the walking ladies, the second soubrette (and boys' parts), the utility woman, and the ladies of the ballet. These were the principal "lines of business," and in an artistic sense they bound actors both hand and foot; so utterly inflexible were they that the laws of the Medes and Persians seemed blithe and friendly things in comparison.

"Oh, I can't play that; it's not in my line!" "Oh, yes, I sing, but the singing don't belong to my line!" "I know, he *looks* the part and I don't, but it belongs to my line!" and so, nearly every week, some performance used to be marred by the slavish clinging to these defined "lines of business."

Mr. Augustin Daly was the first manager who dared to ignore the absolute "line." "You must trust my judgment to cast you for the characters you are best suited to perform, and you must trust my honor not to lower or degrade you, by casting you below your rightful position,

for I will not be hampered and bound by any fixed 'lines of business.'" So said he to all would-be members of his company. The pill was a trifle bitter in the swallowing, as most pills are, but it was so wholesome in its effect that ere long other managers were following Mr. Daly's example.

But to return to our mutton. If the family theatre was disliked by those who had already won recognized positions, it was at least an ideal place in which a young girl could begin her professional life. The manager, Mr. John A. Ellsler, was an excellent character-actor as well as a first old man. His wife, Mrs. Effie Ellsler, was his leading woman — his daughter Effie, though not out of school at that time, acted whenever there was a very good part that suited her. The first singing soubrette was the wife of the prompter and the stage-manager. The first old woman was the mother of the walking lady, and so it came about that there was not even the pink flush of a flirtation over the first season, and, though another season was shaken and thrilled through and through by the elopement and marriage of James Lewis with Miss Frankie Hurlburt, a young lady from private life in Cleveland, yet in all the years I served in that old theatre, no real scandal ever smirched it.

True, one poor little ballet-girl fell from our ranks and was drawn into that piteous army of women, who, with silk petticoats and painted cheeks, seek joy in the bottom of the wine cup. Poor little soul! how we used to lock the dressing-room door and lower our voices when we spoke of having seen her.

I can never be grateful enough for having come under the influence of the dear woman who watched over me that first season — Mrs. Bradshaw, one of the most versatile, most earnest, most devoted actresses I ever saw, and a good woman besides.

She had known sorrow, trouble, and loss. She was widowed, she had two children to support unaided, but she made moan to no one. She worked early and late;

she rehearsed, studied, acted, mended, and made; for her salary absolutely forbade the services of a dress-maker. She had two gowns a year, one thick, one thin. She could not herself compute the age of her bonnets, so often were they blocked over, or dyed and retrimmed. Yet no better appearing woman ever entered a stage-door than this excessively neat, well-groomed, though plainly clad, old actress.

It is not to be denied that a great many professional women are absolutely without the sense of order. Their irregular hours, their unsettled mode of life, camping out a few days in this hotel and then in that in a measure explain it, but Mrs. Bradshaw set an example of neat orderliness that was well worth following.

"I can't see," she used to say, "why an actress should be a slattern."

Then if anyone murmured: "Early rehearsals, great haste, you know!" she would answer: "You know at night the hour of morning rehearsal — then get up fifteen minutes earlier, and leave your room in order. Everything an actress does is commented upon, and as she is more or less an object of suspicion, her conduct should be even more rigidly correct than that of other women." She had been a beauty in her youth, as her regular features still proclaimed, and though her figure had become almost Falstaffian, her graceful arm movements and the dignity of her carriage saved her from being in the slightest degree grotesque. The secret of her smiling contentment was her honest love for her work.

We had one taste in common — this experienced woman and my now fourteen-year-old self — books! books! and yet books, we read. I borrowed from my friends and she also read — she borrowed from her friends and I, too, read, and she came to speak of them, and then of her own ideas, and so I found that this woman, already on the way to age, who was so poor and hard-working, and had nothing to look forward to but work, was yet cheerfully contented, because she loved the work — yes, and honored it,

and held her head high, because she was an actress with a clean reputation!

"Study your lines — speak them with exactitude, just as they are written!" she used to say to me, with a sort of passion in her voice.

"Don't just gather the idea of a speech, and then use your own words, that's an infamous habit. The author knew what he wanted you to say — for God's sake honor the poor dead writer's wishes and speak his lines exactly as he wrote them! If he says: 'My lord the carriage waits!' don't you go on and say: 'My lord the carriage is waiting!'"

I almost believe she would have fallen in a dead faint had she been prompted, and to have been late to a rehearsal would have been a shame greater than she could have borne. To this woman's example, I owe the strict business-like habits of attention to study and rehearsals that have won so much praise for me from my managers.

Had Mr. Ellsler's intention of taking his company to another city for a great part of the season been known in advance, my mother would never have given consent to my membership; but the season was three months old before we knew that we were to be transferred to Columbus, the State capital, where we were to remain, while the Legislature sat in large arm-chairs, passing bad bills, and killing good ones, for some three months or more — at least that was the ordinary citizen's opinion of the conduct of the State's wise men. It seemed to me that when a man paid his taxes he felt he had purchased the right to grumble at his representatives to his heart's content.

But that move to Columbus was a startling event in my life. It meant leaving my mother and standing quite alone. She was filled with anxiety, principally for my physical welfare, but I felt, every now and then, my grief and fright pierced through and through with a delicious thrill of importance. I was going to be just like a grown-up, and would decide for myself what I should wear. I might even, if I chose to become so reckless, wear my

Sunday hat to a rehearsal; and when my cheap little trunk came, with C. M. on the end, showing it was my very own, I stooped down and hugged it. But later, when my mother with a sad face separated my garments from her own, taking them from her trunk, where they had always rested before, I burst into sobs and tears of utter forlornness.

The Columbus trip had a special effect upon the affairs of the ballet. We had received $3 a week salary, but every one of us had had some home assistance. Now we were going to a strange city, and no one on earth could manage to live on such a salary as that, so our stipend was raised to $5 a week, and the three of us (we were but three that season) set to work trying to solve the riddle of how a girl was to pay her board-bill, her basket-bill, her wash-bill, and all the small expenses of the theatre — powder, paint, soap, hair-pins, etc., to say nothing at all of shoes and clothing — all out of $5 a week.

Of course there was but one way to do it, and that was by doubling-up and sharing a room with some one, and that first season I was very lucky. Mrs. Bradshaw found a house where the top floor had been finished off as one great long room, running the entire length of the building from gable to gable, and she offered me a share in it.

Oh, I was glad! Blanche and I had one-half the room, and Mrs. Bradshaw and the irrepressible little torment and joy of her life, small Jack, had the other half. No wonder I grew to reverence her, whose character could bear such intimate association as that. I don't know what her religious beliefs were. She read her Bible Sundays, but she never went to church, neither did she believe in a material hell; but it was not long before I discovered that when I said my prayers over in my corner, she paused in whatever she was doing, and remained with downcast eyes — a fact that made me scramble a bit, I'm afraid.

There was but one thing in our close companionship that caused her pain, and that was the inevitable belief of strangers, that I was her daughter and Blanche her pro-

tegée — they being misled by the difference in our manner toward her. In the severity of my upbringing I had been taught that it was nothing short of criminal to be lacking in respect for those who were older than myself; therefore I was not only strictly obedient to her expressed wishes, but I rose when she entered a room, opened and closed doors, placed chairs at table, gave her precedence on all occasions, and served her in such small ways as were possible; while Blanche ignored her to such a degree that one might have mistaken her for a stranger to our little party.

Poor mother! the tears stood thick in her brave eyes when the landlady, on our third day in her house, remarked to her, patting me on the shoulder as she spoke: "You have a most devoted little daughter, here!"

And there was a distinct pause, before she answered, gently: "You mistake — I have a devoted little friend here, in Clara, but Blanche is my daughter!" She was a singular being, that daughter. It is seldom indeed that a girl, who is not bad, can yet be such a thorn in the side of a mother. She was a most disconcerting, baffling creature — a tricksy, elfish spirit, that delighted in malicious fun. Pleasure-loving, indolent, and indifferent alike to praise or blame, she (incredible as it seems) would willingly give up a good part to save herself the trouble of playing it. I recall a trick she once performed in my favor. I thought the *Player-Queen* in "Hamlet" was a beautiful part, and I hungered to play it; but it belonged to Blanche, and, of course, she was cast for it; but said she: "You could have it, for all I'd care!" Then, suddenly, she added: "Say, you may play it with the next *Hamlet* that comes along!"

I pointed out the impossibility of such an assertion coming true, but she grinned widely at me and chewed her gum as one who knew many things beyond my ken, and counselled me to "watch out and see what happened." I watched out, and this happened:

When the mimic-play was going on before the King

and Court, my impish friend Blanche, as the *Player-Queen,* should have said: "Both here and hence, pursue me lasting strife, if once a widow, ever I be wife!"

Instead of which, loudly and distinctly, she proclaimed: "Both here and hence, pursue me lasting strife, *if once a wife, ever I be widowed!*"

Hamlet rolled over on his face, *Queen Gertrude* (Mrs. Bradshaw) groaned aloud, *Polonius* (Mr. Ellsler) threatened discharge, under cover of the laughter of the audience, while guilty Blanche grinned in impish enjoyment of her work, and next "Hamlet" I was cast for the *Player-Queen,* to punish Blanche. To punish her, indeed — she was as merry as a sand-boy, standing about chewing gum and telling stories all the evening.

The "tatting" craze was sweeping over the country then, everybody wore tatting and almost everybody made it. I worked day and night at it, tatting at rehearsal and between scenes, and lady-stars often bought my work, to my great pleasure as well as profit. Blanche wanted a new shuttle, and her mother, who was under extra expense just then, told her she could have it the next week. It was shortly before Christmas, and next morning at rehearsal, with all the company present, Blanche walked up to Mr. Ellsler and asked him if he had any money.

He looked bewildered, and answered somewhat doubtfully that he thought he had a little. "Well," said she, "I want you to give me a quarter, so I can get you a Christmas present."

There was a burst of laughter as Mr. Ellsler handed her the quarter, and after rehearsal this is what she did with it:

On Superior Street a clothing store was being sold out — a forced sale. There she bought a black shoe-string tie for five cents, as a gift for Mr. Ellsler, and elsewhere got for herself a tatting-shuttle and five pieces of chewing-gum, and chuckled over her caper, quite undisturbed by her mother's tears.

One thing only moved her, one thing only she loved, music! She had a charming voice, clear, pure, and cold as crystal, and she sang willingly, nay, even eagerly, whenever she had the opportunity. In after years she became a well-known singer in light opera.

CHAPTER EIGHTH

I Display my New Knowledge — I Return to Cleveland to Face my First Theatrical Vacation, and I Know the very Tragedy of Littleness.

DURING that first season I learned to stand alone, to take care of myself and my small belongings without admonition from anyone. One of my notions was that, since an immortal soul had to dwell in my body, it became my bounden duty to bestow upon it regular and painstaking care in honor of its tenant. The idea may seem extravagant, yet it served me well, since it did for me what a mother's watchful supervision does for other little girls when habits are being formed.

I had learned, too, most of the technical terms used in the profession. I knew all about footlights, wings, flies, borders, drops, braces, grooves, traps, etc. I understood the queer abbreviations. Knew that O.P. side was opposite the prompt side, where the prompter stood with his book of the play to give the word to any actor whose memory failed him and to ring the two bells for the close of the act — one of warning to the curtain-man up aloft to get ready, the other for him to lower the curtain. Knew that R.U.E. and L.U.E. were right or left upper entrance; C., centre of the stage; R.C., right of centre; C.D., centre-door. That to go D.S. or U.S. was an intimation that you would do well to go down stage or up stage, while an X. to C. was a terse request for you to cross to the centre of the stage, and that a whole lot of other letters meant a whole lot of other directions that would only bore a reader.

I understood how many illusions were produced, and one of the proofs that I was meant to be an actress was

to be found in my enjoyment of the mechanism of stage effects. I was always on hand when a storm had to be worked, and would grind away with a will at the crank that, turning a wheel against a tight band of silk, made the sound of a tremendously shrieking wind, which filled me with pride and personal satisfaction. And no one sitting in front of the house looking at a white-robed woman ascending to heaven, apparently floating upward through the blue clouds, enjoyed the spectacle more than I enjoyed looking at the ascent from the rear, where I could see the tiny iron support for her feet, the rod at her back with the belt holding her securely about the waist (just as though she were standing on a large hoe, with the handle at her back), and the men hoisting her through the air, with a painted, sometimes moving, sky behind her.

This reminds me that Mrs. Bradshaw had several times to go to heaven (dramatically speaking), and as her figure and weight made the hoe support useless in her case, she always went to heaven on the entire paint-frame or gallery, as it is called — a long platform the whole width of the stage that is raised and lowered at will by windlass, and on which the artists stand while painting scenery. This enormous affair would be cleaned and hung about with nice blue clouds, and then Mrs. Bradshaw, draped in long, white robes, with hands meekly crossed upon her ample breast and eyes piously uplifted, would rise heavenward, slowly, as so heavy an angel should. But, alas! there was one drawback to this otherwise perfect ascension. Never, so long as the theatre stood, could that windlass be made to work silently. The paint-gallery always moved up or down to a succession of screaks unoilable, untamable, blood-curdling, that were intensified by Mrs. Bradshaw's weight, so that she ascended to the blue tarlatan empyrean accompanied by such chugs and long-drawn yowlings as suggested a trip to the infernal regions. Mrs. Bradshaw's face remained calm and unmoved, but now and then an agonized moan

escaped her, lest even the orchestra's effort to cover up the paint-frame's protesting cries should prove useless. Poor woman, when she had been lowered again to terra firma and stepped off, the whole paint-frame would give a kind of joyous upward spring. She noticed it, and one evening looked back, and said: "Oh, you're not a bit more glad than I am, you screaking wretch!"

I had learned to make up my face properly, to dress my hair in various ways, and was beginning to know something about correct costuming; but as the season was drawing to its close my heart quaked and I was sick with fear, for I was facing, for the first time, that terror, that affliction of the actor's life, the summer vacation.

People little dream what a period of misery that is to many stage folk. Seeing them well dressed, laughing and talking lightly with the acquaintances they meet on the street, one little suspects that the gnawing pain of hunger may be busy with their stomachs — that a woman's fainting "because of the extreme heat, you know," was really caused by want of food. That the fresh handkerchiefs are of their own washing. That the garments are guarded with almost inconceivable care, and are only worn on the street, some older articles answering in their lodgings — and that it is not vanity, but business, for a manager is not attracted by a seedy or a shabby-looking applicant for an engagement.

Oh, the weary, weary miles the poor souls walk! with not a penny in their pockets. They are compelled to say, "Roll on, sweet chariot!" to even the street-car as it appears before their longing eyes.

Some people, mostly men, under these circumstances will stand and look at the viands spread out temptingly in the restaurant windows; others, myself among the number, will avoid such places as one would avoid a pestilence.

We were back in Cleveland for the last of the season, and I used to count, over and over again, my tiny savings and set them in little piles. The wash, the board,

and, dear heaven! there were six long, long weeks of vacation, and I had only one little pile of board money to set against the whole six. I had six little piles of wash money, and one other little pile, the *raison d'être* of which I may explain by and by, if I am not too much ashamed of the early folly.

Now I was staying at that acme of inconvenience and discomfort, a cheap boarding-house, where, by the way, social lines were drawn with sharp distinction, the upper class coldly recognizing the middle class, but ignoring the very existence of the lower class, refugees from ignoble fortune.

Mrs. Bradshaw, by right of dignity and regular payments for the best room in the house, was the star-boarder, and it was undoubtedly her friendship which raised me socially from that third and lowest class to which my small payments would have relegated me.

Standing in my tiny, closet-like room, by lifting myself to my toes, I could touch the ceiling. There was not space for a bureau, but the yellow wash-stand stood quite firmly, with the assistance of a brick, which made up for the absence of part of its off hind leg. There was a kitchen-chair that may have been of pine, but my aching back proclaimed it lignum-vitæ. A mere sliver of a bed stretched itself sullenly in the corner, where its slats, showing their outlines through the meagre bed-clothing, suggested the ribs of an attenuated cab-horse. From that bed early rising became a pleasure instead of a mere duty. Above the wash-stand, in a narrow, once veneered but now merely glue-covered frame, hung a small looking-glass, that, size considered, could, I believe, do more damage to the human countenance than could any other mirror in the world. It had a sort of dimple in its middle, which had the effect of scattering one's features into the four corners of the glass, loosely — a nose and eyebrow here, a mouth yonder, and one's "altogether" nowhere.

It was very disconcerting. Blanche said it made her

quite sea-sick, or words to that effect. This dreadful little apartment lay snug against the roof. In the winter the snow sifted prettily but uncomfortably here and there. In the summer the heat was appalling. Those old-timers who knew the house well, called No. 15 the "torture-chamber," and many a time, during the fiercest heat, Mrs. Bradshaw would literally drive me from the small fiery furnace to her own room, where at least there was air to breathe, for No. 15 had but half a window. And yet, miserable as this place was, it was a refuge and a shelter. The house was well known, it was ugly, as cheap things are apt to be, but it was respectable and safe, and I trembled at the thought of losing my right to enter there.

In the past my mother had been employed by the landlady as seamstress and as housekeeper, besides which she had once nursed the lonely old woman through a severe sickness, and as I had been permitted to live with my mother, Mrs. Miller of course knew me well; so one day when she found me engaged in the unsatisfactory occupation of recounting my money she asked me, very gruffly, what I was going to do through the summer. I gazed at her with wide, frightened eyes, and was simply dumb. More sharply, she asked: "Do you hear? — what are you going to do when the theatre closes?"

I swallowed hard, and then faintly answered: "I've got one week's board saved, Mrs. Miller, but after that I — I —," had my soul depended upon the speaking of another word I could not have uttered it.

She glared her most savage glare at me. She impatiently pushed her false front awry, pulled at her spectacles, and finally took up one of my six little piles of coin and asked: "What's this for?"

"Washing," I gasped.

"You don't send your handkerchiefs to the wash, do you?" she demanded, suspiciously.

I shook my head and pointed to a handkerchief drying on a string at my half-window.

"That's right," she remarked, in a slightly mollified

tone. Then she reached over, took up the pile that was meant for the next week's board, and putting it in her pocket, she remarked: "I'll just take this *now,* so you won't run no risk of losing it, and for the next five weeks after, why, well your mother was honest before you, and I reckon you're going to take after her. You promise to be a hard worker, too, so, well nobody else has ever been able to stay in this room over a week — so I guess you can go on stopping right here, till the theatre opens again, and you can pay me by fits and starts as it comes handy for you. Why, what's the matter with you? Well, I vum! you must be clean tuckered out to cry like that! Land sakes, child! tie a wet rag on your head and lay right down, till you can get picked up a bit!" and out she bounced.

Dear old raging savage! how she used to frighten us all! how she barked and barked, but she never, never bit! How I wanted to kiss her withered old cheek that day when she offered me shelter on trust! But she was eighty-five years old and my honored guest here at "The Pines" before I told her all the terror and the gratitude she brought to me that day.

My clear skin, bright eyes, and round face gave me an appearance of perfect health, which was belied by the pain I almost unceasingly endured. The very inadequate provision my poor mother had been able to make for the necessaries of her child's welfare, the cruel restrictions placed upon my exercise, even upon movement in that wooden chair, where I sat with numb limbs five hours at a stretch, had greatly aggravated a slight injury to my spine received in babyhood. And now I was facing a life of hard work, handicapped by that most tenacious, most cruel of torments, a spinal trouble.

At fourteen I knew enough about such terms as vertebra of the back, spinal-column, spinal-cord, sheath of cord, spinal-marrow, axial nervous system, curvatures, flexes and reflexes to have nicely established an energetic quack as a specialist in spinal trouble; and, alas! after

all these years no one has added to my list of flexes and reflexes the words "fixed or refixed," so my poor spine and I go struggling on, and I sometimes think, if it could speak, it might declare that I am as dented, crooked, and wavering as it is. However, I suppose that state of uncertain health may have caused the capricious appetite that tormented me. Always poor, I had yet never been able to endure coarse food. Heavy meats, cabbage, turnips, beets, fried things filled me with cold repulsion. Crackers and milk formed my dinner, day in and day out. Now and then crackers and water had to suffice me; but I infinitely preferred the latter to a meal of roast pork or of corned beef, followed by rice-pudding.

But the trouble from the fastidious appetite came when it suddenly demanded something for its gratification — imperiously, even furiously demanded it. If anyone desires a thing intensely, the continual denial of that craving becomes almost a torture. So, when that finical appetite of mine would suddenly cry out for oysters, I could think of nothing else. Quick tears would spring into my eyes as I approached the oysterless table. Again and again I would dream of them, cans and cans would be piled on my table (I lived far from shell-oysters then), and when I awoke I would turn on my lumpy bed and moan like a sick animal. I mention this because I wish to explain what that little odd pile of money had been saved for.

At the approach of hot weather a craving for ice-cream had seized upon me with almost agonizing force. It is a desire common to all young things, but the poverty of my surroundings, the lack of the more delicate vegetables, of fruits, of sweets, added to the intensity of my craving. I had found a place away up on the market where for ten cents one could get quite a large saucer of the delicate dainty. Fifteen or twenty-five cents was charged elsewhere for no better cream, but a more decorative saucer.

But, good gracious! what a sum of money — ten cents

for a mere pleasure! though the memory of it afterward was a comfort for several days, and then, oh, unfortunate girl! the sick longing would come again! And so, in a sort of despair, I tried to save thirty cents, with the deliberate intention of spending the whole sum on luxury and folly. Six long, blazing-hot, idle weeks I should have to pass in the "torture-chamber," but with that thirty cents by me I could, every two weeks, loiter deliciously over a plate of cream, feel its velvety smoothness on my lips and its icy coldness cooling all my weary, heat-worn body. One week I could live on memory, and the next upon anticipation, and so get through the long vacation in comparative comfort.

There was no lock upon my room door, but I said nothing about it, as the door would not close anyway; and at night, for security, I placed the lignum-vitæ chair against it. In the day-time I had to entrust my belongings to the honor of my house-mates, as it were.

The six little piles of wash-money I had, after the manner of a squirrel, buried here and there at the bottom of my trunk, which I securely locked; but my precious thirty cents I carried about with me, tied in the corner of a handkerchief. It generally rested in the bosom of my dress, but there came a day when, for economy's sake, I washed a pair of stockings as well as my three handkerchiefs, and Mrs. Miller said I might hang them on the line in the yard below. My tiny window opened in that direction. The day was fiercely hot. I put the money in my pocket and carefully hung my dress up opposite the window, and, in a little white jacket, did out my washing; then, singing happily, I ran downstairs, two long flights, to hang the articles on the line. As I was putting a clothes-pin in place I glanced upward at the musk-plant on my window-sill — and then my heart stood still in my breast. I could neither breathe nor move for the moment. I could see my dress-skirt depending from its nail, and oh, dear God! a man's great red hand was grasping it — was clutching it, here

and there, in search of the pocket! Suddenly I gave a piercing cry, and bounding into the house, I tore madly up the stairs — too late. The dress lay in the doorway — the pocket was empty! On the floor, with my head against the white-washed wall, I sat with closed eyes. The smell of a musk-plant makes me shudder to this day. I sat there stupidly till dusk; then I crept to my sliver of a bed, and cried, and cried, and sobbed the whole weary, hot night through. Next day I simply could not rise, and so for weeks I dragged heavily up and down the stairs, loathing the very sight of the dining-room, and driven half wild with that never-sleeping craving for ice-cream.

It was purgatory, it was the very tragedy of littleness. And that was my first theatrical vacation.

CHAPTER NINTH

The Season Reopens — I meet the Yellow Breeches and become a Utility Man — Mr. Murdock Escapes Fits and my "Luck" Proves to be Extra Work.

THE exuberance of my joy over the opening of the new season was somewhat modified by my close relations with a certain pair of knee-breeches — and I wish to say right here that when Gail Hamilton declared inanimate things were endowed with powers of malice and general mischievousness, she was not exaggerating, but speaking strictly by the card.

Some men think her charge was made solely against collar-buttons, whose conduct the world admits is detrimental to good morals; but they are wrong; she included many things in her charge. Consider the innocent-looking rocking-chair, for instance. When it strikes does not the rocker always find your ankle-joint? In darkness or in light did it ever miss that exact spot? Never! And then how gently it will sway, while you rear and stamp, and, with briny eyes, say — well, things you should not say, things you would not say but for the malice of an inanimate thing.

Perhaps the quickest way to win your sympathy is to tell you at once that those knee-breeches were made of yellow plush, bright yellow — I thought that would move you! There was a coat, too — yes, things can always be worse, you see; and when I was crowded into that awful livery I felt like hopping about in a search for hemp-seed, I looked so like an enormous canary that had outgrown its cage.

Had Gail Hamilton known those breeches she would have said: "Here is total depravity in yellow plush!"

You see, the way they got their grip on me originally was this. There had been two utility men engaged for the company, but one of them was taken sick and could not come to the city at all, and the other one made the manager sick, and was discharged for utter incompetency, and that very night there was required a male servant who could in the first act summon the star to the presence of his employer, with a name hard to pronounce; and in the last act, when the star had become the boss of the whole affair, could announce the coming of his carriage.

"Could I do those two lines?"

"Oh, yes!" I joyfully announced my ability and my willingness; "but I had no clothes."

And then, instead of turning the part into a girl attendant, in an evil moment the manager bethought himself of some wardrobe he had purchased from a broken up or down opera manager, and search discovered the yellow-plush breeches, coat, and white wig. I put them on — the canary was hatched!

I played the part of two announcements; I walked out clear from the hip, like a boy — and I became the utility man of the company, and the tormented victim of the yellow breeches.

I was a patient young person and willing to endure much for art's sake, but that wig was too much. Built of white horse-hair mounted upon linen, its heat and weight were fearful. It had evidently been constructed for a big, round, perfectly bumpless head. It came down to my very eyebrows on top, and at the sides, instead of terminating just at the hair-line above the ear, it swallowed up my ears, covered my temples, and extended clear to my eyes, giving me the appearance of being harnessed up in large white blinders — like a shying horse. In common humanity the manager released me from the wig and let me wear powder, but the clutch of the yellow breeches remained unbroken.

As in their opera days (I don't know what they sang, but they were probably in the chorus) they had wan-

dered through the world, knowing all continental Europe and the South Americas, so now they wandered through dramatic literature. One night accompanying me on to deliver a note to Madame de Pompadour, the next night those same yellow breeches and I skipped back to Louis XIV., and admitted many lords and ladies, with tongue-tying names, to that monarch's presence, only to skip forward again, in a few days, to bring in mail-bags to snuffy rural gentry, under almost any of the Georges. Though the lace ruffles and jabots of the French period might give place to a plain red waistcoat for the Georgian English household, the canary breeches were always there, ready to burst into song at any moment, to basely fire off a button or break a buckle just at the moment of my entrance-cue, treacherously suggesting, by their easy wrinkling while I stood, that I might just as well sit down and rest my tired feet, and the moment I attempted to lower myself to a chair, beginning such a mad cracking and snapping in every seam as brought me upright with a bound and the settled conviction that weariness was preferable to public shame.

I am glad to this day that the stage-door was always kept locked, for, had it been open, heaven only knows where those cosmopolitan breeches might have taken me — they were such experienced travellers that a trip to Havana or to the City of Mexico would have struck them as a nice little jaunt.

My pleasantest moments as utility man came to me when, in a very brief white cotton Roman shirt and sandals, I led the shouts for the *supers,* who are proverbially dumb creatures before the audience, though noisy enough behind the scenes. So all the furious and destructive mobs of that season were led on by a little whipper-snapper who yelled like a demon with a copper-lined throat and then stood about afterward peacefully making tatting.

It must not be thought that I had in the first place a monopoly of the small parts; far from it, but the com-

pany being rather short of utility people, if the ballet-girls could play speaking servants, it not only saved a salary or two to the manager, but it was of immense advantage to the girls themselves. Then, too, Mr. Ellsler was particularly anxious to avoid any charge of favoritism; so in the earliest days these little parts were given out turn and turn about, without choice or favor — indeed, two or three times my short dress caused me to be passed over in favor of long dresses and done-up hair. But a few disasters, caused by failure of memory or loss of nerve on the part of these competitors, gave the *pas* to me, and it must be remembered that these lapses and mishaps, though amusing to recall, were absolutely disastrous at the time, ruining, as they did, the scene, if not the entire act, in which they occurred.

With special vividness I recall the first one of these happenings. "Romeo and Juliet" was the play, and *Balthazar* the part. I longed for it because, aside from his fine speech, he was really quite important and had to show tenderness, anxiety, and determination during the time *Romeo* addressed him. I pleaded with my eyes, but I could not, dared not speak up and ask for the part, as did Annie, who was older than I. The star and prompter exchanged a few low-spoken sentences. I caught the condemnatory word "child," and knew my fate was sealed — long skirts and turned-up hair had won. However, my wound was salved when the page to *Paris* was given me with two lines to speak.

Now there is no one but *Romeo* on the stage when *Balthazar* enters, which, of course, gives him great prominence. His first speech, of some fifty or fifty-six words, is simply expressed, not at all involved, yet from the moment Annie received the part she became a broken, terror-stricken creature. Many people when nervous bite their nails, but Annie, in that state of mind, had a funny habit of putting her hand to the nape of her neck and rubbing her hair upward. She had a pretty dress of her own, but she had to borrow a wig, and, like all borrowed wigs,

it failed to fit; it was too small, and at last, when the best had been done, its wobbly insecurity must have been terrifying.

The girl's figure was charming, and as she stood in the entrance in her boy's costume, I remarked: "You look lovely, Annie!"

Silently she turned her glassy, unseeing eyes toward me, while she shifted her weight swiftly from one foot to the other, opening and shutting her hands spasmodically. *Romeo* was on, and he joyously declared:

"My bosom's lord sits lightly in his throne!"

He then described his happy dream — I heard the words:

"When but love's shadows are so rich in joy!"

And there Annie staggered forward on to the stage.

"News from Verona!" cried *Romeo:* "How now, Balthazar?"

Oh, well might he ask "How now?" for, shifting from foot to foot, this stricken *Balthazar* was already feeling at the nape of her neck, and instead of answering the questions of *Romeo* about *Juliet* with the words:

"Then she is well, and nothing can be ill,
Her body sleeps in Capets' monument,
And her immortal part with angels lives;
I saw her laid low in her kindred's vault,
And presently took post to tell it you:
O pardon me for bringing these ill news,
Since you did leave it for my office, sir,"

these were the startling statements he made in gulps and gasps:

"O-Oh, y-yes! Sh-e's very well — and nothing's wrong;

[titter from audience, and amazement on *Romeo's* face]

H-her immortal parts are in a vault,
I — I saw them laid there, and come to tell you!"

Perhaps she would have got to the right words at last, but just there the wig, pushed too hard, lurched over on one side, giving such a piratical look to the troubled face that a very gale of laughter filled the house, and she retired then and there, though in the next speech she should have refused to leave *Romeo:*

> " Pardon me, sir, I will not leave you thus:
> Your looks are pale and wild,"

yet now, because his looks were red and wild, she left without permission, and the enraged instead of grieving *Romeo* had no one to receive his order:

> " ——— get me ink and paper,
> And hire post horses."

So when, in his confusion, he went on continuing his lines as they were written, and, addressing empty space, fiercely bade *Balthazar:*

> " ——— get thee gone ! "

and in unintentionally suggestive tones promised:

> " ——— I'll be with thee straight ! "

the audience laughed openly and heartily at the star himself.

" Yes, sir," he snorted later on to Mr. Ellsler, " by heaven, sir ! they laughed at me — AT ME ! I have been made ridiculous by your measly little *Balthazar* — who should have been a man, sir ! Yes, sir, a man, whom I could have chastised for making a fool of himself, sir ! and a d—d fool of me, sir ! "

For the real tragedy of that night lay in the wound given to the dignity of Mr. F. B. Conway, who played a measured and stately *Romeo* to the handsome and mature *Juliet* of his wife.

We had no young *Juliets* just then, they were all rather advanced, rather settled in character for the reckless child of Verona. But every lady who played the part declared at rehearsal that Shakespeare had been foolish to make *Juliet* so young — that no woman had learned enough to understand and play her before middle age at least.

Mrs. Bradshaw, one day, said laughingly to me: "By your looks you seemed to disagree with Mrs. Ellsler's remarks this morning. She, too, thinks a woman is not fit for *Juliet* until she has learned much of nature and the world."

"But," I objected, lamely, "while they are learning so much about the world they are forgetting such a lot about girlhood!"

Her laughter confused and distressed me. "I can't say it!" I cried, "but you know how very forward *Juliet* is in speech? If she *knew,* that would become brazen boldness! It isn't what she *knows,* but what she *feels* without knowing that makes the tragedy!" And what Mrs. Bradshaw meant by muttering, "Babes and sucklings — from the mouths of babes and sucklings," I could not make out; perhaps, however, I should say that my mate Annie played few blank-verse parts after *Balthazar.*

Then, one Saturday night, we were all corralled by the prompter before we could depart for home, and were gravely addressed by the manager — the whole thing being ludicrously suggestive of the reading of the riot act; but after reminding us that Mr. James E. Murdoch would begin his engagement on Monday night, that the rehearsals would be long and important, he proceeded to poison the very source of our Sunday's rest and comfort by fell suggestions of some dire mishap threatening the gentleman through us. We exchanged wondering and troubled glances. What could this mean?

Mr. Ellsler went on: "You all know how precise Mr. Murdoch has always been about your readings; how exacting about where you should stand at this word or at that; how quickly his impatience of stupidity has burst

into anger; but you probably do not know that since his serious sickness he is more exacting than ever, and has acquired the habit, when much annoyed, of — of — er — well, of having a fit."

"O-h!" it was unanimous, the groan that broke from our oppressed chests. Stars who *gave us* fits we were used to, but the star who went into fits himself — good heavens! good heavens!

Rather anxiously, Mr. Ellsler continued: "These fits, for all I know, may spell apoplexy — anyway, he is too frail a man to safely indulge in them; so, for heaven's sake, do nothing to cross him; be on time, be perfect — dead letter-perfect in your parts; write out all his directions if necessary; grin and bear anything, so long as he doesn't have a fit! Good-night."

The riot act had been read, the mob dispersed, but the nerve of the most experienced was shaken by the prospect of acting a whole week with a gentleman who, at any moment, might get mad enough to have a fit.

Think, then, what must have been the state of mind of my other ballet-mate, Hattie, who, in her regular turn, had received a small part, but of real importance, and who had to address her lines to Mr. Murdoch himself. Poor girl, always nervous, this new terror made her doubly so. She roused the star's wrath, even at rehearsal.

"Speak louder!" (imperatively). "*Will* you speak louder?" (furiously). "Perhaps, in the interest of those who will be in front to-night, I may suggest that you speak loud enough to be heard by — say — the first row!" (satirically). Now a calmly controlled body is generally the property of a trained actress, not of a raw ballet-girl, and Hattie's restless shifting about and wriggling drove him into such a rage that, to the rest of us, he seemed to be trembling with inchoate fits, and I saw the property man get his hat and take his stand by the stage-door, ready to fly for the doctor, or, as he called him, "the fit sharp."

She, too, was to appear as a page. She was to enter

hurriedly — always a difficult thing for a beginner to do. She was to address Mr. Murdoch in blank verse — a *more* difficult thing — and implore him to come swiftly to prevent bloodshed, as a hostile meeting was taking place between young Count So-and-so and "your nephew, sir!"

This news was to shock the uncle so that he would stand dazed for a moment, when the page, looking off the stage, should cry:

> "Ah, you are too late, sir, already their blades are out!
> See how the foils writhe," etc.

With a cry, the uncle should recover himself, and furiously order the page to

> "——— call the watch!"

Alas! and alas! when the night, the play, the act, the cue came, Hattie, as handsome a boy as you could wish to see, went bravely on, as quickly, too, as her terror-chilled legs could carry her, but when she got there had no word to say — no, not one!

In a sort of icy rage, Mr. Murdoch gave her her line, speaking very low, of course:

> "My lord — my lord! I do beseech you haste,
> Else here is murder done!"

But the poor girl, past prompting properly, only caught wildly at the *sense* of the speech, and gasped out:

> "Come on, quick!"

She saw his foot tapping with rage — thought his fits might begin that way, and madly cried, at the top of her voice:

> "Be quick — see — see! publicly they cross their *financiers!*"

then, through the laughter, rushed from the stage, crying, with streaming tears: "I don't care if he has a dozen fits! He has just scared the words out of my head with them!"

And truly, when Mr. Murdoch, trembling with weakness, excitement, and anger, staggered backward, clasping his brow, everyone thought the dreaded fit had arrived.

Next day he reproachfully informed Mr. Ellsler that he could not yet see blank verse and the King's English (so he termed it) murdered without suffering physically as well as mentally from the shocking spectacle. That he was an old man now, and should not be exposed to such tests of temper.

Yes, as he spoke, he was an old man — pallid, lined, weary-faced; but that same night he was young *Mirabel* — in spirit, voice, eye, and movement. Fluttering through the play, "Wine Works Wonders," in his satins and his laces — young to the heart — young with the immortal youth of the true artist.

Both these girls spoke plain prose well enough, and always had their share of the parts in modern plays; but, as all was grist to my individual mill, most of the blank-verse and Shakespearean small characters came to me. Nor was I the lucky girl they believed me; there was no luck about it. My small success can be explained in two words — extra work. When they studied their parts they were contented if they could repeat their lines perfectly in the quiet of their rooms, and made no allowance for possible accidents or annoyances with power to confuse the mind and so cause loss of memory and ensuing shame. But I was a careful young person, and would not trust even my own memory without first taking every possible precaution. Therefore the repeating of my lines correctly in my room was but the beginning of my study of them. In crossing the crowded street I suddenly demanded of myself my lines. At the table, when all were chatting, I again made sudden demand for the same.

If on either occasion my heart gave a jump and my memory failed to present the exact word, I knew I was not yet perfect, and I would repeat those lines until, had the very roof blown off the theatre at night, I should not have missed one. Then only could I turn my attention to the acting of them — oh, bless you, yes! I quite thought I was acting, and at all events I was doing the next best thing, which was trying to act.

But a change was coming to me, an experience was approaching which I cannot explain to myself, neither has anyone else explained it for me; but I mention it because it made such a different thing of dramatic life for me. Aye, such a difficult thing as well. Looking back to that time I see that all my childhood, all my youth, was crowded into that first year on the stage. There I first knew liberty of speech, freedom of motion. There I shared in the general brightness and seemed to live by right divine, not by the grudging permission of some task-mistress of my mother. I had had no youth before, for in what should have been babyhood I had been a troubled little woman, most wise in misery. In freedom my crushed spirits rose with a bound. The mimicry, the adaptability of childhood asserted themselves — I pranced about the stage happily but thoughtlessly.

It seems to me I was like a blind puppy, born into warmth and comfort and enjoying both, without any fear of the things it could not see. As I have said before, I knew no fear, I had no ambition, I was just happy, blindly happy; and now, all suddenly, I was to exchange this freedom of unconsciousness for the slavery of consciousness.

CHAPTER TENTH

With Mr. Dan. Setchell I Win Applause — A Strange Experience Comes to Me—I Know Both Fear and Ambition—The Actress is Born at Last

MY manager considered me to have a real gift of comedy, and he several times declared that my being a girl was a distinct loss to the profession of a fine low comedian.

It was in playing a broad comedy bit that my odd experience came to me. Mr. Dan. Setchell was the star. He was an extravagantly funny comedian, and the laziest man I ever saw — too lazy even properly to rehearse his most important scenes. He would sit on the prompt table — a table placed near the footlights at rehearsal, holding the manuscript, writing materials, etc., with a chair at either end, one for the star, the other for the prompter or stage manager — and with his short legs dangling he would doze a little through people's scenes, rousing himself reluctantly for his own, but instead of rising, taking his place upon the stage, and rehearsing properly, he would kick his legs back and forth, and, smiling pleasantly, would lazily repeat his lines where he was, adding: "I'll be on your right hand when I say that, Herbert. Oh, at your exit, Ellsler, you'll leave me in the centre, but when you come back you'll find me down left."

After telling James Lewis several times at what places he would find him at night, Lewis remarked, in despair: "Well, God knows where you'll find *me* at night!"

"Oh, never mind, old man," answered the ever-smiling, steadily kicking Setchell, "if you're there, all right; if you're not there, no matter!" which was not exactly flattering.

Of course such rehearsals led to many errors at night, but Mr. Setchell cleverly covered them up from the knowledge of the laughing audience.

It is hard to imagine that lazy, smiling presence in the midst of awful disaster, but he was one of the victims of a dreadful shipwreck while making the voyage to Australia. Bat-blind to the future, he at that time laughed and comfortably shirked his work in the day-time, and made others laugh when he did his work at night.

In one of his plays I did a small part with him — I was his wife, a former old maid of crabbed temper. I had asked Mr. Ellsler to make up my face for me as an old and ugly woman. I wore corkscrew side curls and an awful wrapper. I was a fearful object, and when Mr. Setchell first saw me he stood silent a moment, then, after rubbing his stomach hard, and grimacing, he took both my hands, exclaiming: "Oh, you hideous jewel! you positively gave me a cramp at just sight of you! Go in, little girl, for all you're worth! and do just what you please — you deserve the liberty for that make-up!"

And goodness knows I took him at his word, and did anything that came into my giddy head. Even then I possessed that curious sixth sense of the born actress, and as a doctor with the aid of his stethoscope can hear sounds of grim warning or of kindly promise, while there is but the silence to the stander-by, so an actress, with that stethoscopic sixth sense, detects even the *forming* emotions of her audience, feeling incipient dissatisfaction before it becomes open disapproval, or thrilling at the intense stillness that ever precedes a burst of approbation.

And that night, meeting with a tiny mishap, which seemed to amuse the audience, I seized upon it, elaborating it to its limit, and making it my own, after the manner of an experienced actor.

There was no elegant comedy of manners in the scene, understand, it was just the broadest farce, and it consisted of the desperate effort of a hen-pecked husband to assert himself and grasp the reins of home government,

which resolved itself at last into a scolding-match, in which each tried to talk the other down — with what result you will know without the telling.

The stage was set for a morning-room, with a table in the centre, spread with breakfast for two; a chair at either side and, as it happened, a footstool by mine. His high silk hat and some papers, also, were upon the table. For some unexplainable cause the silk hat has always been recognized, both by auditor and actor, as a legitimate object of fun-making, so when I, absent-mindedly, dropped all my toast-crusts into that shining receptacle, the audience expressed its approval in laughter, and so started me on my downward way, for that was my own idea and not a rehearsed one. When my husband mournfully asked if "There was not even one hot biscuit to be had?" I deliberately tried each one with the back of my knuckles, and remarking, "Yes, here is just one," which was the correct line in the play, I took it myself, which was not in the play, and so went on till the scolding-match was reached.

In my first noisy speech I meant to stamp my foot, but by accident I brought it down upon the footstool. The people laughed, I saw a point — I lifted the other foot and stood upon the stool. By the twinkle in Mr. Setchell's eye, as well as by the laughter in front, I knew I was on the right track.

He roared — he lifted his arms above his head, and in my reply, as I raised my voice, I mounted from the stool to the seat of the chair. He seized his hat, and with the toast-crusts falling about his face and ears, jammed it on his head, while in my last speech, with my voice at its highest screech, I lifted my foot and firmly planted it upon the very breakfast-table.

It was enough — the storm broke from laughter to applause. Mr. Setchell had another speech — one of resigned acceptance of second place, but as the applause continued, he knew it would be an anti-climax, and he signalled the prompter to ring down the curtain.

But I — I knew he ought to speak. I was frightened, tears filled my eyes. "What is it?" I whispered, as I started to get down.

"Stand still," he sharply answered, then added: "It's you, you funny little idiot! you've made a hit — that's all!" and the curtain fell between us and the laughing crowd in front.

The prompter started for me instantly from his corner, exclaiming, in his anger: "Well, of all the cheeky devilment I ever heard or saw —" But Mr. Setchell had him by the arm in a second, crying: "Hold on, old man! I gave her leave — she had my permission! Oh, good Lord! did you see that ascent of stool, chair, and table? eh? ha! ha! ha!"

I stood trembling like a jelly in a hot day. Mr. Setchell said: "Don't be frightened, my girl! that applause was for you! You won't be fined or scolded — you've made a hit, that's all!" and he patted me kindly on the shoulder and broke again into fat laughter.

I went to my room, I sat down with my head in my hands. Great drops of sweat came out on my temples. My hands were icy cold, my mouth was dry, that applause rang in my ears. A cold terror seized upon me — a terror of what, the public?

Ah, a tender mouth was bitted and bridled at last! the reins were in the hands of the public, and it would drive me — where?

The public! the public! I had never feared it before, because I had never realized its power. If I pleased, well and good. If I displeased it, I should be driven forth from the dramatic Eden I loved, in which I hoped to learn so many things theatrical and to become very wise, and I should wander all my life in the stony places of poverty and disappointment! I clenched my hands and writhed in misery at the thought. I seemed again to hear that applause, which had been for me — my very self! and I thrilled at its wild sweetness. Ah, the public! it could make or it could mar my whole life. Mighty

monster, without mercy! The great many-headed creature, all jewelled over with fierce, bright eyes, with countless ears a-strain for error of any kind! That beat the perfumed air with its myriad hands when pleased — when pleased! A strange, great stillness seemed to close about me; something murmured: "In the future, in the *dim* future, a woman may cause this many-headed monster you fear to think as one mind, to feel as one heart! *Then* the bit and bridle will be changed — that woman will hold the reins and will drive the public!" At which I broke into shrill laughter, in spite of flowing tears. Two women came in, one said: "Why, what on earth's the matter? Have they blown you up for your didoes to-night? What need you care, you pleased the audience?" But another said, quietly: "Just get a glass of water for her, she has a touch of hysteria — I wonder who caused it?"

But I only thought of that woman of the dim future, who was to conquer the public — who was she?

Why that round of applause should have so shattered my happy confidence I cannot understand, but the fact remains that from that night I never faced a new audience, or attempted a new part, without suffering a nervous terror that sometimes but narrowly escaped collapse.

CHAPTER ELEVENTH

My Promiscuous Reading wins me a Glass of Soda—The Stage takes up my Education and Leads me through Many Pleasant Places.

I SUPPOSE it sounds absurd to say that during those first seasons, with choruses, dances, and small parts to learn, with rehearsals every day and appearances every night, I was getting an education.

But that depends upon your definition of the word. If it means to you schooling, special instruction, and formal training, then my claim is absurd; but if it means information, cultivation of the intellectual powers, enlightenment, why then my claim holds good, my statement stands, I was getting an education. And let me say the stage is a delightful teacher; she never wearies you with sameness or drives you to frenzy with iteration. No deadly-dull text-book stupefies you with lists of bare, bald dates, dryly informing you that someone was born in 1208, mounted the throne in 1220, died in 1258, and was succeeded by someone or other who reigned awhile — really you can't remember how long, and don't much care. There's nothing in figures for the memory to cling to. But no one can forget that Edward V. was born in 1470, because he is such a tragic little figure, only thirteen years old and of scant two months reign, because there was the Tower and there the crafty, usurping Duke of Gloster eager for his crown.

Perhaps people would remember that Edward III. was born in 1312 and was succeeded by his grandson, Richard, if they were told at the same moment that he was father to that superb Black Prince, beloved alike of poet, painter, and historian.

Now, to be a good actress and do intelligent work, one should thoroughly understand the play and its period in history, as the mainspring of its action is often political. To be able to do that requires a large fund of general information. That I had from my very babyhood been a reckless reader, came about from necessity — I had no choice, I simply read every single thing in print that my greedy hands closed upon; the results of this promiscuous reading, ranging from dime novels to Cowper, were sometimes amusing. One day, I remember, an actress was giving a very excited account of a street accident she had witnessed. Her colors were lurid, and some of her hearers received her tale coldly. "Oh!" she cried, "such an awful crowd — a mob, you know — a perfect mob!"

"Oh, nonsense!" contradicted another, "there couldn't have been a mob, there are not people enough in that street to make a mob!"

Then I mildly but firmly remarked: "Oh, yes, there are, for you know that legally three's a mob and two's a crowd."

A shout of laughter followed this bit of information. "How utterly absurd!" cried one. "Well, of all the ridiculous ideas I ever heard!" laughed another. And then, suddenly, dear old Uncle Dick (Mr. Richard Stevens and player of old men, to be correct) came to my support, and, with the authority of a one-time barrister, declared my statement to be perfectly correct.

"But where, in the name of Heaven, did you get your information?"

"Oh," I vaguely replied, "I just read it somewhere."

"That's a rather broad statement," remarked Uncle Dick; "you don't give your authority, page and line, I observe. Well, see here, now, Clara *mia*, in whatever field you found that one odd fact, you certainly gleaned others there, so if you can produce, at once, three other legal statements, I will treat you to soda-water after rehearsal."

Oh, the delicious word was scarcely over his lips when I was wildly searching my memory, and presently, very doubtfully, offered the statement: "It is a fraud to conceal a fraud."

But Uncle Dick gravely and readily accepted it. Another search, and then joyfully I announced: "Contracts made with minors, lunatics, or drunkards are void."

A shout of laughter broke from the kind old man's lips, but he accepted that, too. Oh, almost I could hear the cool hiss of the soda — but now not another thing could I find. My face fell, my heart sank. Hitherto I had been thinking of papers, now I frantically ran through stories. Suddenly I cried: "A lead-pencil signature stands in law."

But, alas! Uncle Dick hesitated — my authority was worthless. Oh, dear! oh, dear! was I to lose my treat, just for lack of a little legal knowledge? Sadly I remarked, "I guess I'll have to give it up, unless — unless you'll take: 'Principals are responsible for their agents,'" and, with pleasure beaming in his kind old eyes, he accepted it.

Ah, I can taste that vanilla soda yet — and, what is more, the old gentleman took the trouble to find out about the legality of the lead-pencil signature; and, as my statement had been correct, he took great pains to make the fact known to all who had heard him question it, and he added to my little store of knowledge, "that a contract made on Sunday would not stand," which, by the way, later on, saved me from a probably painful experience.

I mention this to show that even my unadvised reading had not been absolutely useless, I had learned a little about a variety of things; but now, plays continually presented new subjects to me to think and read about; thus "Venice Preserved" set me wild to find out what a *Doge* was, and why Venice was so adored by her sons, and I straightway obtained a book about the wonderful city — whose commerce, power of mart and merchant

may have departed, but whose mournful beauty is but hallowed by her weakness.

So many plays were produced, representing so many periods, so many countries, I don't know how I should have satisfied my craving for the books they led me to had not the Public Library opened just then. I was so proud and happy the day my mother surprised me with half the price of a membership, and happier yet when I had the right to enter there and browse right and left, up and down, nibbling here, feeding long and contentedly there. Oh, the delight of reading one book, with two or three others in my lap; 'twas the pleasure of plenty, new to one who could have spelled "economy" in her sleep.

Then, again, if it is the Stage that is making you read, you have to keep your eyes wide open and take note of many things. Some girls read just for the sake of the story, they heed nothing but that, they are even guilty of the impertinence of "skipping," "to get to the story more quickly, you know." But if you are on the stage you understand, for instance, that different kinds of furniture are used for different periods and for different countries; so even the beginner knows, when she sees the heavy old Flemish pieces of furniture standing on the stage in the morning, that no modern play is on that night, and is equally sure that the bringing out of the high tile-stove means a German interior is in preparation. Therefore, if you read for the stage, you watch carefully, not only Sir Thomas's doings, but his surroundings. If his chair or desk or sideboard is described, you make a note of the "heavily carved wood," or the "inlaid wood," or the "boule," or whatever it may be, and then you note the date of the story, and you say to yourself: "Ah, such and such furniture belongs to such a date and country."

I once heard the company expressing their shocked amazement over the velvet robes of some *Macbeth*. I could not venture to ask them why it was so dreadful,

but later I found some paper stating that velvet was first known in the fifteenth century, and was confined to the use of the priests or high ecclesiastical authorities — and my mind instantly grasped the horror of the older actors at seeing *Macbeth* swathed in velvet in the grim, almost barbaric Scotland of about 1012; for surely it was a dreadful thing for an actor to wear velvet four hundred years ahead of its invention.

You never know just where the Stage is going to lead you in your search for an education; only one thing you may be sure of, it will not keep you very long to any one straight road, but will branch off in this direction or in that, taking up some side issue, as it seems, like this matter of furniture, and lo, you presently find it is becoming a most important and interesting subject, well worth careful study. You come to believe you could recognize the workmanship of the great cabinet-makers at sight. You learn to shrink from misapplied ornament, you learn what gave rise to the "veneering reign-of-terror," you bow at the name of Chippendale, and are filled with wonder by the *cinque-cento* extravagance of beauty. You find yourself tracing the rise and fall of dynasties through the chaste beauty or the over-ornamentation of their cabinet work. If all that Sir Henry Irving knows on this subject could be crowded into a single volume, the book would have at least one fault — 'twould be of most unwieldy size.

Then holding you by the hand the Stage may next lead you through the green and bosky places that the poets loved, and, having had your eyes opened to natural beauties, lo! you go down another lane, and you are learning about costumes, and suddenly you discover that "sumptuary laws" once existed, confining the use of furs, velvets, laces, etc., to the nobility. Fine woollens and linens, and gold and silver ornaments being also reserved for the privileged orders. That the extravagant young maids and beaux of the lower class who indulged in yellow starched-ruff, furred mantle, or silver chain were made to pay a

cruel price for their folly in aping their betters. So it was well for me to make a note of the date of the "sumptuary law," that I might not some day outrageously overdress a character.

It is a delightful study, that of costume — to learn how to drape the toga, how to hang the peplum; to understand the meaning of a bit of ribbon in the hair, whether as arranged in the three-banded fillet of the Grecian girl or as the snood of the Scottish lassie; to know enough of the cestus and the law governing its wearing, not to humiliate yourself in adopting it on improper occasions; to have at least a bowing acquaintance with all foot-gear, from sandals down to an Oxford tie; to be able to scatter your puffed, slashed, or hanging sleeves over the centuries, with their correct accompanying, small-close, large-round, or square-upstanding ruffs. Why the mere detail of girdles and hanging pouches, from distant queens down to "Faust's" *Gretchen,* was a joy in itself.

Then a girl who played pages, and other young boys, was naturally anxious to know all about doublets, trunks, and hose, as well as Scottish "philibeg and sporran." And wigs? I used to wonder if anyone could ever learn all about wigs — and I'm wondering yet.

But as one studies the coming and going of past fashions in garments, it is amusing to note their influence upon the cabinet-makers, as it is expressed in the changing shape of their chairs. For instance: when panniers developed into farthingale and monstrous hoop, chairs, high and narrow, widened, lowered their arms — dropped them entirely, making indeed a fair start toward our own great easy-chair of to-day.

I remember well what a jump my heart gave when in rooting about among materials — their weaves and dyes — I came upon the term "samite." It's a word that always thrills me, "samite, mystic, wonderful." Almost I was afraid to read what might follow; but I need not have hesitated, since the statement was that "samite" was supposed to have been a delicate web of silk and gold

or silver thread. How beautiful such a combination must have been — white silk woven with threads of silver might well become "mystic, wonderful," when wrapped about the chill, high beauty of an Arthur's face.

But hie and away, to armor and arms! for she would be but a poorly equipped actress who had no knowledge of sword and buckler, of solid armor, chain-mail, rings of metal on velvet, or of plain leather jerkin — of scimitar, sword, broadsword, foil, dagger, dirk, stiletto, creese.

Oh, no! don't pull your hand away if the Stage wants to lead you among arms and armor for a little while; be patient, for by and by it will take you up, up into the high, clear place where Shakespeare dwells, and there you may try your wings and marvel at the pleasure of each short upward flight, for the loving student of Shakespeare always rises — never sinks. Your power of insight grows clearer, stronger, and as you are lifted higher and higher on the wings of imagination, more and more widely opens the wonderful land beneath, more and more clearly the voices of its people reach you. You catch their words and you treasure them, and by and by, through much loving thought, you comprehend them, after which you can no longer be an uneducated woman, since no man's wisdom is superior to Shakespeare's, and no one gives of his wisdom more lavishly than he.

Therefore, while a regular school-education is a thing to be thankful for, the actress who has been denied it need not despair. If she be willing to work, the Stage will educate her — nor will it curtly turn her away at the end of a few years, telling her her "term" is ended. I clung tightly to its hand for many a year, and was taken a little way through music's halls, loitered for a time before the easel, and even made a little rush at a foreign language to help me to the proper pronunciation of names upon the stage; and no man, no woman all that time rose up to call me ignorant. So I give all thanks and all honor to the profession that not only fed and clothed me, but educated me too!

CHAPTER TWELFTH

The Peter Richings' Engagement brings me my First Taste of Slander—Anent the Splendor of my Wardrobe, also my First Newspaper Notice.

I REMEMBER particularly that second season, because it brought to me the first taste of slander, my first newspaper notice, and my first proposal of marriage. The latter being, according to my belief, the natural result of lengthening my skirts and putting up my hair — at all events, it was a part of my education.

Of course the question of wardrobe was a most important one still. I had done very well, so far as peasant dresses of various nationalities were concerned; I had even acquired a page's dress of my own, but I had no ball-dress, nothing but a plain, skimpy white muslin gown, which I had outgrown; for I had gained surprisingly in height with the passing year. And, lo! the report went about that Mr. Peter Richings and his daughter Caroline were coming in a fortnight, and they would surely do their play "Fashion," in which everyone was on in a dance; and I knew everyone would bring out her best for that attraction, for you must know that actresses in a stock company grade their costumes by the stars, and only bring out the very treasures of their wardrobes on state occasions. I was in great distress; one of my mates had a genuine silk dress, the other owned a bunch of artificial gold grapes, horribly unbecoming, stiff things, but, mercy, gold grapes! who cared whether they were becoming or not? Were they not gorgeous (a lady star had given them to her)? And I would have to drag about, heavy-footed, in a skimpy muslin!

But in the company there was a lady who had three

charming little children. She was the singing soubrette (by name Mrs. James Dickson). One of her babies became sick, and I sometimes did small bits of shopping or other errands for her, thus permitting her to go at once from rehearsal to her beloved babies. Entering her room from one of these errands, I found her much vexed and excited over the destruction of one of a set of fine new lace curtains. The nursemaid had carelessly set it on fire. Of course Mrs. Dickson would have to buy two more curtains to replace them; and now, with the odd one in her hand, she started toward her trunk, paused doubtfully, and finally said to me: "Could you use this curtain for some small window or something, Clara?"

At her very first word a dazzling possibility presented itself to my mind. With burning cheeks, I answered: "Oh, yes, ma'am, I — I can use it, but not at a window, I'm afraid." Her bonnie face flashed into smiles.

"All right; take it along, then!" she cried, "and do what you like with it. It's only been up two days, and has not a mark on it."

I fairly flew from the house. I sang, as I made my way uptown to buy several yards of rose-pink paper cambric and a half garland of American-made artificial roses. Then I sped home and, behind locked doors, measured and cut and snipped, and, regardless of possible accident, held about a gill of pins in my mouth while I hummed over my work. All my fears were gone, they had fled before the waving white curtain, which fortunately for me was of fine meshed net, carrying for design unusually small garlands of roses and daisies. And when the great night came, I appeared as one of the ball guests in a pink under-slip, with white lace overdress, whose low waist was garlanded with wild roses. So, happy at heart and light of foot, I danced with the rest, my pink and white gown ballooning about me in the courtesies with as much rustle and glow of color as though it had been silk.

But, alas! the imitation was too good a one! The

pretty, cheap little gown I was so happy over attracted the attention of a woman whose whisper meant scandal, whose lifted brow was an innuendo, whose drooped lid was an accusation. Like a carrion bird she fed best upon corruption. Thank Heaven! this cruel creature, hated by the men, feared by the women, was not an actress, but through mistaken kindness she had been made wardrobe woman, where, as Mr. Ellsler once declared, she spent her time in ripping up and destroying the reputation of his actors instead of making and repairing their wardrobes.

That nothing was too small to catch her pale, cold eye is proved by the fact that even a ballet-girl's dress received her attention. Next day, after the play "Fashion" had been done, this woman was saying: "That girl's mother had better be looking after her conduct, I think!"

"Why, what on earth has Clara done?" asked her listener.

"Done!" she cried, "didn't you see her flaunting herself around the stage last night in silks and laces no honest girl could own? Where did the money come from that paid for such finery?"

A few days later a woman who boarded in the house favored by the mischief-maker happened to meet Mrs. Dickson, happily for me, and said, *en passant:* "Which one of your ballet-girls is it who has taken to dressing with so much wicked extravagance? I wonder Mrs. Ellsler don't notice it."

Now Mrs. Dickson was Scotch, generous, and "unco" quick-tempered, and after she had put the inquiring friend right, she visited her wrath upon the originator of the slander in person, and verily the Scottish burr was on her tongue, and her "r's" rolled famously while she explained the component parts of that extravagant costume: window curtain — her gift — and paper cambric and artificial flowers to the cost of one dollar and seventy-five cents; "and you'll admit," she cried, "that even the purse of a 'gude lass' can stand sic a strain as that;

and what's mair, you wicked woman, had the girl been worse dressed than the others, you would ha' been the first to call attention to her as slovenly and careless."

This was the first drop of scandal expressed especially for me, and I not only found the taste bitter — very bitter — but learned that it had wonderful powers of expansion, and that the odor it gives off is rather pleasant in the nostrils of everyone save its object.

Mrs. Dickson, who, by the way, is still doing good work professionally, has doubtless forgotten the entire incident, curtain and all, but she never will forget the bonnie baby-girl she lost that summer, and she will remember me because I loved the little one — that's a mother's way.

Mr. Peter B. Richings was that joy of the actor's heart — a character. He had been accounted a very fine actor in his day, but he was a very old man when I saw him, and his powers were much impaired. Six feet tall, high-featured, Roman-nosed, elegantly dressed; a term from bygone days — and not disrespectfully used — describes him perfectly: he was an "old Buck!"

His immeasurable pride made him hide a stiffening of the joints under the forced jauntiness of his step, while a trembling of the head became in him only a sort of debonair senility at worst. Arrogant, short-tempered, and a veritable martinet, he nevertheless possessed an unbending dignity and a certain crabbed courtliness of manner very suggestive of the snuff-box and ruffle period of a hundred years before.

His daughter, by adoption, was the object of his unqualified worship — no other word can possibly express his attitude toward her. No heavenly choir could have charmed him as she did when she sang, while her intellectual head and marble-cold face seemed beautiful beyond compare in his eyes. Really it was worth going far to see him walk through a quadrille with her. His bow was a thing for young actors to dream of, while with trembling head, held high in air, he advanced and retreated, executing antiquated "steps" with a grace that

deprived them of comicality, while his air of arrogant superiority changed instantly to profound homage whenever in the movement of the figures he met his daughter.

His pronunciation of her name was as a flourish of trumpets — Car-o-line! Each syllable distinct, the "C" given with great fulness, and the emphasis on the first syllable when pleased, but heavily placed upon the last when he was annoyed.

He was unconscionably vain of his likeness to Washington, and there were few Friday nights, this being considered the fashionable evening of the week, that he failed to present his allegorical picture of Washington receiving the homage of the States, while Miss Richings, as *Columbia,* sang the "Star-Spangled Banner," the States joining in the chorus.

In this tableau the circular opening in the flat, backed by a sky-drop and with blue clouds hanging about the opening, represented heaven. And here, at an elevation, Washington stood at the right, with *Columbia* and her flag on his left, while the States, represented by the ladies of the company, stood in lines up and down the stage, quite outside of heaven.

Now a most ridiculous story anent Mr. Richings and this heaven of his was circulating through the entire profession. Some of our company refused to believe it, declaring it a mere spiteful skit against his well-known exclusiveness; but that gentleman who had wished to send me for an "Ibid," being an earnest seeker after knowledge, determined to test the truth of the story. Therefore, after we had been carefully rehearsed in the music and had been informed by the star that only Car-O-line and himself were to stand back of that sky-like opening, this "inquiring" person gave one of the extra girls fifty cents to go at night before the curtain rose and take her stand on the forbidden spot. She took the money and followed directions exactly, and when Mr. Richings, as *Washington,* made his pompous way to the stage, he stood a moment in speechless wrath, and then, trembling with anger, he stamped his foot, and waving

his arm, cried: "Go a-way! Go a-way! you very presuming young person; this is heaven, and I told you this morning that only my daughter Car-O-line and I could possibly stand in heaven!"

It was enough; the "inquiring one" was rolling about with joy at his work. He had taken a rise out of the old gentleman and proved the truth of the story which had gone abroad in the land as to this claim of all heaven for himself and his Car-O-line.

I naturally remember these stars with great clearness, since it was for a small part in one of their plays that I received my first newspaper notice. Imagine my incredulous joy when I was told of this journalistic feat — unheard of before — of praising the work of a ballet-girl. Suspecting a joke, I did not obtain a paper until late in the day, and after I had several times been told of it. Then I ventured forth, bought a copy of the *Herald,* and lo, before my dazzled eyes appeared my own name. Ah, few critics, with their best efforts, have thrown as rosy a light upon the world as did Mr. Jake Sage with his trite ten-word statement: "Clara Morris played the small part allotted to her well."

My heart throbbed hard, I seemed to catch a glimpse, through the rosy light, of a far-away Temple of Fame, and this notice was like a petal blown to me from the roses that wreathed its portals. Could I ever, ever reach them!

"Played the small part allotted to her well." "Oh," I cried aloud, "I will try to do everything well — I will, indeed!" and then I cut the notice out and folded it in a sheet of paper, and put both in an envelope and pinned that fast to my pocket, that I might take it to my mother, who was very properly impressed, and was a long time reading its few words, and was more than a trifle misty about the eyes when she gave it back to me. Looking at them now, the words seem rather dry and scant, but then they had all the sweetness, life, and color of a June rose — the most perfect thing of God's bounteous giving.

CHAPTER THIRTEENTH

Mr. Roberts Refers to Me as "That Young Woman," to My Great Joy—I Issue the "Clara Code"—I Receive my First Offer of Marriage.

MY mother, moved at last by my highly colored accounts of the humiliations brought upon me by the shortness of my skirts, consented to their lengthening, and though I knew she had meant them to stop at my shoe-tops, I basely allowed a misunderstanding to arise with the dress-maker, through which my new dress came home the full length of the grown-ups, and though my conscience worried me a bit, I still snatched a fearful joy from my stolen dignity, and many a day I walked clear up to Superior Street that I might slowly pass the big show-windows and enjoy the reflection therein of my long dress-skirt. Of course I could not continue to wear my hair *à la* pigtail, and that went up in the then fashionable chignon.

Few circumstances in my life have given me such unalloyed satisfaction as did my first proposal of marriage. I should, however, be more exact if I spoke of an "attempted proposal," for it was not merely interrupted, but was simply mangled out of all likeness to sentiment or romance. The party of the first part in this case was Mr. Frank Murdoch, who later on became the author of "Davy Crockett," the play that did so much toward the making and the unmaking of the reputation of that brilliant actor, the late Frank Mayo. He was the adoring elder brother of that successful young Harry Murdoch who was to meet such an awful fate in the Brooklyn Theatre fire. Neither of them, by the way, were born to the name of Murdoch; they were the sons of James

E.'s sister, and when, in spite of his advice and warning, they decided to become actors, they added insult to injury, as it were, by deman ing of him the use of his name — their own being a particularly unattractive one for a play-bill. He let them plead long and hard before he yielded and allowed them to take for life the name of Murdoch — which as a trade-mark, and quite aside from sentiment, had a real commercial value to these young fellows who had yet to prove their individual personal worth.

Frank was very young — indeed, our united ages would have barely reached thirty-six. He had good height, a good figure, and an air of gentle breeding; otherwise he was unattractive, and yet he bore a striking resemblance to his uncle, James Murdoch, who had a fine head and most regular features. But through some caprice of nature in the nephew those same features received a touch of exaggeration here, or a slight twist there, with the odd result of keeping the resemblance to the uncle intact, while losing all his beauty. Frank had a quixotic sense of honor and a warm and generous heart, but being extremely sensitive as to his personal defects he was often led into bursts of temper, during which he frequently indulged in the most childish follies. These outbreaks were always brief, and ever followed by deep contrition, so that he was generally regarded as a very clever, spoiled child.

Poor boy! his life was as sad as it was short. There may be few who remember him now, but a woman never forgets the man who first pays a compliment to her eyes, nor can I forget the first man who handed me a chair and opened and closed doors for me, just as for any grown-up.

He joined the company in about the middle of that season in which I acted principally as utility man. He was to play singing parts and young lovers, and, to his amusement, I criticized his reading of one of *Cassio's* speeches. Our wrangle over Shakespeare made friends

of us at once. He had a veritable passion for poetry, and with me he felt free to bring out his beautiful hobby to mount and ride and ride, with some of the great poets up behind and me for applauding audience. When he wanted me to know some special poem he bought it for me if he could; but if he was short of money, he carefully copied out its every line, tied the manuscript neatly up with ribbon, and presented the poem in that form. I came across a copy of "Maud Muller" the other day in Frank's clear, even handwriting. The paper was yellow, the ribbon faded. Frank is gone, Whittier is gone, but "Maud Muller" lives on in her immortal youth and pain.

But the morning when he first brought and offered me a chair was nothing less than an epoch in my life. At first I regarded the act as an aspersion on my strength — a doubt cast upon my ability to obtain a seat for myself. Then, as I glanced frowningly into his face, I suddenly realized that it was meant as a mark of consideration — the courtesy a man shows a woman. A glow of satisfaction spread through my being. I hated to rise, I was so afraid the thing might never happen to me again. I need not have worried, however, as I was soon to receive a more impressive proof of his consideration for my welfare.

One of the most unpleasant experiences in the life of a young actress is her frightened lonely rush through the city streets at twelve o'clock at night to reach her boarding-house and claim sanctuary. I doubt if even a Una and her lion could pass unmolested through those streets dotted with all-night "free and easys," where, by the way, nothing is free but the poisonous air, and nothing easy but the language. At all events from my own varied and unpleasant experiences, and from the stories of others, I had first drawn certain deductions, then I had proceeded to establish certain rules for the guidance and direction of any girl who was so unfortunate as to be forced to walk abroad unattended at night. These rules

became known as "Clara's Code," and were highly approved, especially by those girls who "couldn't think," as they declared, but stood stock-still, "too frightened to move," when some wanderer of the night unceremoniously addressed them.

I cannot remember all those rules now, since for these many years God has granted me a protector, but from the few I can recall I am convinced that their principal object was to gain plenty of leeway for the persecuted girl's escape. No. 3 sternly forbade her ever, *ever* to pass between two advancing men — at night, of course, be it understood — lest they might seize hold of and so frighten her to death. She was advised never to permit herself to take the inside of the walk when meeting a stranger, who might thus crowd her against the house and cut off her chance to run. Never to pass the opening to an alley-way without placing the entire width of the walk between her and it, and always to keep her eyes on it as she crossed. Never to let any man pass her from behind on the outside was insisted on, indeed she should take to the street itself first. She was not to answer a drunken man, no matter what might be the nature of his speech. She was not to scream — if she could help it — for fear of public humiliation, but if the worst came and some hideous prowler of the night passed from speech to actual attack, then she was to forget her ladyhood and remembering only the tenderness of the male shin and her right of self-defence, to kick like a colt till help came or she was released.

Other portions of the code I have forgotten, but I do distinctly remember that it wound up with the really Hoyle-like observation, "When in doubt, take to the centre of the street."

We all know the magic power of the moonlight — have seen it transmute the commonest ugliness into perfect beauty and change a world-worn woman into the veriest lily-maid, but how few know the dread power exerted over man by the street gaslight after midnight.

The kindest old drake of the farm-pond, the most pompously harmless gobbler of the buckwheat-field becomes a vulture beneath the midnight street-light. A man who would shoot for being called a blackguard between seven o'clock in the morning and twelve at night, often becomes one after midnight. It is frequently said that "words break no bones," but let a young girl pass alone through the city streets a few nights and she will probably hear words that, drowning her in shamed blushes, will go far toward breaking her pride, if not her bones. Men seem to be creatures of very narrow margin — they so narrowly escape being gods, and they so much more narrowly escape being animals. Under the sunlight, man, made in the image of God, lifts his face heavenward and walks erect; under the street-lamps of midnight he is stealthy, he prowls, he is a visible destruction! You think I exaggerate the matter? Do not; I speak from experience. And, what is more, at that time I had not yet learned what the streets of New York could produce after midnight.

But on the night after the chair episode, Frank Murdoch heard one of the girls say she had used the Clara Code very successfully the night before, when two drunken men had reeled out of an alley, who would have collided with her had she not followed the rule and kept the whole sidewalk between them. He stood at the door as I came down-stairs, and as soon as I reached him he asked, sharply: "Do you go home alone of nights?"

"Yes," I answered.

"Good God!" he muttered.

After a pause I looked up at him, and met his eyes shining wet and blue through two tears. "Oh," I hastily added, "there's nothing to be afraid of."

"I wish I could agree with you," he answered. "Tell me," he went on, "have you ever been annoyed by anyone?"

My eyes fell, I knew I was growing red.

"Good God!" he said again, then, suddenly, he or-

dered: "Give me that bag — you'll not go through these streets alone again while I am here! Never mind the distance. I don't see why you can't take my arm."

And thus I found myself for the first time escorted by a gentleman, and after my hot embarrassment wore off a bit, I held my head very high and languidly allowed my skirt to trail in the dust, and said to myself: "This is like a real grown-up — surely they can't call me 'child' much longer now."

The star playing with us just then was a tragedian, but he was a very little man, whose air of alertness, even of aggressiveness, had won for him the title of "Cocky" Roberts. He wore enormously high heels, he had thick cork soles on the outside and thick extra soles on the inside of all his boots and shoes. His wigs were slightly padded at their tops — everything possible was done for a gain in height, while all the time he was sputtering and swearing at what he called "this cursed cult of legs!"

"Look at 'em!" he snorted — for he did snort like a horse when he was angry, as he often was, at the theatre at least. "Look at 'em, Ellsler; there's Murdoch, Proctor, Davenport, all gone to legs, damn 'em, and calling themselves actors! 'You don't look for brains in a man's legs, do you? No! no! it's the cranium that tells! Yes, blast 'em! Let 'em come here and match craniums with me, that they think it smart to call 'Cocky'! They're a lot of theatrical tongs — all legs and no heads!"

And yet the poor, fuming little man, with his exaggerated strut, would have given anything short of his life, to have added even a few inches to his anatomy, the brevity of which was quite forgotten by the public when he gave his really brilliant and pathetic performance of "Belphegor," one of the earliest of the so-called "emotional" plays.

I have a very kindly remembrance of that fretful little star, because when they were discussing the cast of a play, one of those tormenting parts turned up that are of great importance to the piece, but of no importance

themselves. Capable actresses refuse to play them, and incapable ones create havoc in them. This one had already been refused, when Mr. Roberts suddenly exclaimed: "Who was it made those announcements last night? She spoke with beautiful distinctness; let *that* young woman have the part, she'll do it all right."

Oh, dear Mr. Roberts! never "Cocky" to me! Oh, wise little judge! how I did honor him for those precious words: "Let that young woman have the part." That "*young woman!* I could have embraced him for very gratitude — a part *and* the term "young woman," and since, as my old washerwoman used to say, "it never rains but it pours," while these two words were still making music in my ears, by some flash of intuition I realized that I was being courted by Frank. The discovery filled me with the utmost satisfaction. I gave no thought to him, in a sentimental way, either then or ever; quite selfishly I thought only of my own gain in dignity and importance, for I started out in life with the old-fashioned idea that a man honored a woman by his courtship, and I knew naught of the lover who "loves and rides away." Yet in a few days the curious cat-like instinct of the unconscious coquette awakened in me, and I began very gently to try my claws.

I wished very much to know if he were jealous, as I had been told that real lovers were always so; and, naturally, I did not wish mine to fall short of any of the time-honored attributes of loverdom. Therefore I, one morning, selected for experimental use a man whose volume of speech was a terror to all. Had he been put to the sword, he would have talked to the swordsman till the final blow cut his speech. He was most unattractive, too, in appearance, being one of those actors who get shaved after rehearsal instead of before it, thus gaining a reputation for untidiness that facts may not always justify — but he served my purpose all the better for that.

I deliberately placed myself at his side; I was only a ballet-girl, but I had two good ears — I was welcome.

Conversation, or rather the monologue, burst forth. Standing at the side of the stage, with rehearsal going on, he of course spoke low. I watched for Frank's arrival. He came, I heard his cheery "Good-morning, ladies! good-morning, gentlemen!" and then he started toward me, but I heard nothing, saw nothing of *him*. My upraised eyes, as wide as I possibly could make them, were fixed upon the face of the talker. Yet, with a jump of the heart, I knew the brightness had gone from Frank's face, the spring from his step. I smiled as sweetly as I knew how; I seemed to hang upon the words of the untidy one, and oh! if Frank could only have known what those words were; how I was being assured that he, the speaker, had that very morning succeeded in stopping a leaky hole in his shoe by melting a piece of india-rubber over and on it, and that not a drop of water had penetrated when he had walked through the rain-puddles; and right there, like music, there came to my listening ear a word of four letters — a forbidden word, but one full of consolation to the distressed male; a word beginning with "d," and for fear that you may think it was "dear," why, I will be explicit and say that it was "damn!" and that it was from the anger-whitened lips of Frank, who during the morning gave not only to me, but to all lookers-on, most convincing proof of his jealousy, and that was the beginning of my experiments.

I did this, to see if it would make him angry. I did that, to see if it would please him. Sometimes I scratched him with my investigating claws, then I was sorry — truly sorry, because I was grateful always for his gentle goodness to me, and never meant to hurt him. But he represented the entire sex to me, and I was learning all I could, thinking, as I once told him, that the knowledge might be useful on the stage some time, and I wondered at the very fury my words provoked in him.

We quarrelled sometimes like spiteful children, as when I, startled into laughter by hearing his voice break in a speech, unfortunately excused myself by saying:

"It was just like a young rooster, you know!" and he, white with anger, cried: "You're a solid mass of rudeness, to laugh at a misfortune; you have no breeding!"

This brought from me the rejoinder: "I know it, but you would have shown better breeding yourself had you not told me of it!"

And then he was on his knee in the entrance, begging forgiveness, and saying his "cursed, cracking voice made a madman of him!"

As it really did, for he often accused people of guying him if they did but clear their own throats. And so we went on till something in his manner — his increased efforts to find me alone at rehearsal, for as I was without a room-mate in Columbus, I could not receive him at home, and I truly think he would have kept silence forever rather than have urged me to break any conventional rule of propriety — this something gave me the idea that Frank was going to be — well — explicit, that — that — I was going to be proposed to according to established form.

Now, though a proposal of marriage is a thing to look forward to with desire, to look back upon with pride, it is also a thing to avoid when it is in the immediate future, and I so successfully evaded his efforts to find me alone, at the theatre or at some friend's house, that he was forced at last to speak at night, while escorting me home.

I lodged in a quiet little street, opening out of the busier, more noisy Kinsman Street. In our front yard there lived a large, greedy old tree, which had planted its foot firmly in the very middle of the path, thus forcing everyone to *chassé* around it who wished to enter the house. Its newly donned summer greenery extended far over the gate, and as the moon shone full and fair the "set" was certainly appropriate.

We reached the gate, and I held out my hand for my bag — that small catch-all of a bag that, in the hand of the actress, is the outward and visible sign of her profession; but he let the bag slip to the walk and caught

my hand in his. The street was deserted. Leaning against the gate beneath the sheltering boughs of the old tree, the midnight silence all about us, he began to speak earnestly.

I made a frantic search through my mind for something to say presently, when my turn would come to speak. I rejected instantly the ancient wail of "suddenness." Frank's temper did not encourage an offer of "sisterhood." I was just catching joyously at the idea of hiding behind the purely imaginary opposition of my mother, when Frank's words: "Then, too, dear heart! I could protect you, and—" were interrupted by a yowl, so long, so piercing, it seemed to rise like a rocket of anguish into the summer sky.

"Oh!" I thought, "that's one-eared Jim from next door, and if our Simmons hears him — and he'd have to be dead not to hear — he will come out to fight him!" I clenched my teeth, I dropped my eyes that Frank might not see the threatening laughter there. I noted how much whiter his hand was than mine, as they were clasped in the moonlight. The pause had been long; then, very gently, he started again: "Mignonne!"

Distinctly I heard the thump of Simmons's body dropping from the porch-roof. "Mignonne, look up! you big-eyed child, and tell me that I may go to your mother with your promise!"

"Mi-au! Mi-au! Wow! Spit! Spit! Wow!" Four balls of fire glowed for a moment beneath the tree, then two dark forms became one dark form, that whirled and bounded through space, emitting awful sounds. The cats were too much for me, I threw back my head and laughed.

My laugh was too much for Frank. His temper broke, he flung my hand away, crying out: "Laugh, you little idiot! You're worse than the animals, for they at least know no better! Laugh till morning, if you like!" and then I'm sorry to say it, but he kicked my bag, the precious insignia of my profession, and rushed down the

street, leaving me standing there amid the débris of the wrecked proposal.

Next night he frigidly presented himself to escort me home, and when I coldly declined his company, he turned silently and left me. Truth to tell, I did not enjoy my walk alone, through the market-place in particular, and I planned to unbend a little the next evening; but I was much piqued to find myself without an excuse for unbending, since on the next evening he did not offer his company. The third night there was a big lump in my throat, and the tears would have fallen had they not been suddenly dried in my eyes by the sight of a familiar light-gray suit slipping along close to the houses on the other side of the way. Petulant, irritable, loyal-hearted boy! he had safe-guarded me both those nights when I thought I was alone! My heart was warm with gratitude toward him, and when I reached my gate, and passed inside, I called across the street: "Thank you, Frank! Good-night!"

And he laughed and answered: "Good-night, Mignonne!"

And so it came about that Frank's wooing, being of the strict and stately order, I gradually came to be Miss Morris to others beside himself. I saw my advance in dignity, and if I did not love him I gave him profound gratitude, and we were true friends his short and honorable life through.

CHAPTER FOURTEENTH

Mr. Wilkes Booth comes to us, the whole Sex Loves him — Mr. Ellsler Compares him to his Great Father — Our Grief and Horror over the Awful Tragedy at Washington.

IN glancing back over those two crowded and busy seasons one figure stands out with such clearness and beauty that I cannot resist the impulse to speak of him, rather than of my own inconsequential self. In his case only (so far as my personal knowledge goes) there was nothing derogatory to dignity or to manhood in being called beautiful, for he was that bud of splendid promise, blasted to the core before its full triumphant blooming — known to the world as a madman and an assassin—but to the profession as "that unhappy boy," John Wilkes Booth.

He was so young, so bright, so gay, so kind. I could not have known him well. Of course, too, there are two or three different people in every man's skin, yet when we remember that stars are not generally in the habit of showing their brightest, their best side to the company at rehearsal, we cannot help feeling both respect and liking for the one who does.

There are not many men who can receive a gash over the eye in a scene at night without at least a momentary outburst of temper, but when the combat between *Richard* and *Richmond* was being rehearsed, Mr. Booth had again and again urged Mr. McCollom (that six-foot tall and handsome leading man, who entrusted me with the care of his watch during such encounters) to "Come on hard! Come on hot! Hot, old fellow! Harder — faster!" He'd take the chance of a blow, if only they could make a hot fight of it.

And Mr. McCollom, who was a cold man, at night became nervous in his effort to act like a fiery one. He forgot he had struck the full number of head blows, and when Booth was pantingly expecting a thrust, McCollom, wielding his sword with both hands, brought it down with awful force fair across Booth's forehead. A cry of horror rose, for in one moment his face was masked in blood, one eybrow being cut cleanly through. There came, simultaneously, one deep groan from *Richard,* and the exclamation: "Oh, good God! good God!" from *Richmond,* who stood shaking like a leaf and staring at his work. Then Booth, flinging the blood from his eyes with his left hand, said, as genially as man could speak: "That's all right, old man! never mind me — only come on hard, for God's sake, and save the fight!"

Which he resumed at once, and though he was perceptibly weakened, it required the sharp order of Mr. Ellsler to "ring the first curtain bell," to force him to bring the fight to a close, a single blow shorter than usual. Then there was a running to and fro, with ice and vinegar paper and raw steak and raw oysters. When the doctor had placed a few stitches where they were most required, he laughingly declared there was provision enough in the room to start a restaurant. Mr. McCollom came to try to apologize, to explain, but Booth would have none of it; he held out his hand, crying: "Why, old fellow, you look as if *you* had lost the blood. Don't worry. Now if my eye had gone, that *would* have been bad!" And so, with light words, he tried to set the unfortunate man at ease, and though he must have suffered much mortification as well as pain from the eye, that in spite of all endeavors would blacken, he never made a sign.

He was, like his great elder brother, rather lacking in height, but his head and throat, and the manner of its rising from his shoulders, were truly beautiful. His coloring was unusual, the ivory pallor of his skin, the inky blackness of his densely thick hair, the heavy lids

of his glowing eyes, were all Oriental, and they gave a touch of mystery to his face when it fell into gravity; but there was generally a flash of white teeth behind his silky mustache, and a laugh in his eyes.

One thing I shall never cease to admire him for. When a man has placed a clean and honest name in his wife's care for life, about the most stupidly wicked use she can make of it is as a signature to a burst of amatory flattery, addressed to an unknown actor, who will despise her for her trouble. Some women may shrivel as though attacked with "peach-leaf curl" when they hear how these silly letters are sometimes passed about and laughed at. "No gentleman would so betray a confidence!" Of course not; but once when I made that remark to an actor, who was then flaunting the food his vanity fed upon, he roughly answered: "And no *lady* would so address an unknown man. She cast away her right to respectful consideration when she thrust that letter in the box." That was brutal; but there are those who think like him this very day, and oh, foolish tamperers with fire, who act like him!

Now it is scarcely an exaggeration to say the sex was in love with John Booth, the name Wilkes being apparently unknown to his family and close friends. At depot restaurants those fiercely unwilling maiden-slammers of plates and shooters of coffee-cups made to him swift and gentle offerings of hot steaks, hot biscuits, hot coffee, crowding round him like doves about a grain basket, leaving other travellers to wait upon themselves or go without refreshment. At the hotels, maids had been known to enter his room and tear asunder the already made-up bed, that the "turn-over" might be broader by a thread or two, and both pillows slant at the perfectly correct angle. At the theatre, good heaven! as the sunflowers turn upon their stalks to follow the beloved sun, so old or young, our faces smiling, turned to him. Yes, old or young, for the little daughter of the manager, who played but the *Duke of York* in "Richard III.," came to

the theatre each day, each night of the engagement, arrayed in her best gowns, and turned on him fervid eyes that might well have served for *Juliet.* The manager's wife, whose sternly aggressive virtue no one could doubt or question, with the aid of art waved and fluffed her hair, and softened thus her too hard line of brow, and let her keen black eyes fill with friendly sparkles for us all — yet, 'twas because of him. And when the old woman made to threaten him with her finger, and he caught her lifted hand, and uncovering his bonnie head, stooped and kissed it, then came the wanton blood up in her cheek as she had been a girl again.

His letters then from flirtatious women, and, alas! girls, you may well believe were legion. A cloud used to gather upon his face at sight of them. I have of course no faintest idea that he lived the godly, righteous, and sober life that is enjoined upon us all, but I do remember with respect that this idolized man, when the letters were many and rehearsal already on, would carefully cut off every signature and utterly destroy them, then pile the unread letters up, and, I don't know what their final end was, but he remarked with knit brows, as he caught me watching him at his work one morning: "They," pointing to the pile of mutilated letters, "they are harmless now, little one; their sting lies in the tail!" and when a certain free and easy actor, laughingly picked up a very elegantly written note, and said: "I can read it, can't I, now the signature is gone?" He answered, shortly: "The woman's folly is no excuse for our knavery — lay the letter down, please!"

I played the *Player-Queen* to my great joy, and in the "Marble Heart" I was one of the group of three statues in the first act. We were supposed to represent *Lais, Aspasia,* and *Phryne,* and when we read the cast, I glanced at the other girls (we were not strikingly handsome), and remarked, gravely: "Well, it's a comfort to know that we look so like the three beautiful Grecians."

A laugh at our backs brought us around suddenly to

face Mr. Booth, who said to me: "You satirical little wretch, how do you come to know these Grecian ladies? Perhaps you have the advantage of them in being all-beautiful within?"

"I wish it would strike outward, then," I answered; "you know it's always best to have things come to the surface!"

"I know some very precious things are hidden from common sight, and I know, too, you caught my meaning in the first place; good-night." And he left us.

We had been told to descend to the stage at night with our white robes hanging free and straight, that Mr. Booth himself might drape them as we stood upon the pedestal. It really is a charming picture, that of the statues in the first act. Against a backing of black velvet, the three white figures, carefully posed, strongly lighted, stand out so marble-like, that when they slowly turn their faces and point to their chosen master, the effect is uncanny enough to chill the looker-on.

Well, with white wigs, white tights, and white robes, and half strangled with the powder we had inhaled in our efforts to make our lips stay white, we cautiously descended the stairs. We dared not talk, we dared not blink our eyes, for fear of disturbing the coat of powder; we were lifted to the pedestal and took our places as we expected to stand. Then Mr. Booth came, such a picture in his Greek garments as made even the men exclaim at him, and began to pose us. It happened that one of us had very good limbs, one medium good, and the third had apparently walked on broom-sticks. When Mr. Booth slightly raised the drapery of No. 3, his features gave a twist as though he had suddenly tasted lemon-juice, but, quick as a flash, he said: "I believe I'll advance you to the centre, for the stately and wise *Aspasia*." The central figure wore her draperies hanging straight to her feet, hence the "advance" and consequent concealment of the unlovely limbs. It was quickly and kindly done, for the girl was not only spared mortifica-

tion, but in the word "advance" she saw a compliment, and was happy accordingly. Then my turn came; my arm was placed about *Aspasia,* my head bent and turned and twisted, my right hand curved upon my breast, so that the forefinger touched my chin; I felt I was a personified simper, but I was silent and patient until the arrangement of my draperies began — then I squirmed anxiously.

"Take care, take care!" he cautioned, "you will sway the others if you move!" But, in spite of the risk of my marble make-up, I faintly groaned: "Oh, dear! must it be like that?"

Regardless of the pins in the corner of his mouth, he burst into laughter, and taking a photograph from the bosom of his Greek shirt, he said: "I expected a protest from you, miss, so I came prepared; don't move your head, but just look at this."

He held the picture of a group of statuary up to me: "This is you on the right; it's not so dreadful, now, is it?" and I cautiously murmured, that if I wasn't any worse than that I wouldn't mind.

And so we were all satisfied and our statue scene was very successful.

Next morning I saw Mr. Booth come running out of the theatre on his way to the telegraph office at the corner, and right in the middle of the walk, staring about him, stood a child — a small roamer of the stony streets, who had evidently got far enough beyond his native ward to arouse misgivings as to his personal safety, and at the very moment he stopped to consider matters, Mr. Booth dashed out of the stage-door and added to his bewilderment by capsizing him completely.

"Oh, good Lord! Baby, are you hurt?" exclaimed Mr. Booth, pausing instantly to pick up the dirty, tousselled, small heap and stand it on its bandy legs again.

"Don't cry, little chap!" and the aforesaid little chap not only ceased to cry but gave him a damp and grimy smile, at which the actor bent toward him quickly, but

paused, took out his handkerchief, and first carefully wiping the dirty little nose and mouth, stooped and kissed him heartily, put some change in each freckled paw, and continued his run to the telegraph office.

He knew of no witness to the act. To kiss a pretty, clean child under the approving eyes of mamma might mean nothing but politeness, but surely it required the prompting of a warm and tender heart to make a young and thoughtless man feel for and caress such a dirty, forlorn bit of babyhood as that.

Of his work, I suppose I was too young and too ignorant to judge correctly, but I remember well hearing the older members of the company express their opinions. Mr. Ellsler, who had been on terms of friendship with the elder Booth, was delighted with the promise of his work. He greatly admired Edwin's intellectual power, his artistic care, but "John," he cried, "has more of the old man's power in one performance than Edwin can show in a year. He has the fire, the dash, the touch of *strangeness.* He often produces unstudied effects at night. I question him, 'Did you rehearse that business to-day, John?' he answers: 'No, I didn't rehearse it, it just came to me in the scene, and I couldn't help doing it; but it went all right, didn't it?' Full of impulse, just now, like a colt, his heels are in the air, nearly as often as his head, but wait a year or two till he gets used to the harness, and quiets down a bit, and you will see as great an actor as America can produce!"

And, by the way, speaking of Mr. Ellsler and the elder Booth, I am reminded that I have in my possession a letter from the latter to the former. It is written in a rather cramped hand, that carries the address and the marks of the red wafers, as that was before the appearance of envelopes, and it informs Mr. Ellsler that he, "Junius Brutus Booth, will play a star engagement of one week for the sum of—" how many dollars? if it were not unguessable, I should insist upon your guessing, but that would not be fair, so here it is — "for the

sum of three hundred dollars," and wants to know how many and what plays he is desired to do, that he may select his wardrobe.

Think of it — the mighty father of our Edwin asking but $300 for a week of such acting as he could do, which, if this bright, light-hearted boy was so much like him, must have been brilliant indeed.

One morning, going on the stage where a group were talking with John Wilkes, I heard him say: "No! no, no! there's but one *Hamlet* to my mind, that's my brother Edwin. You see, between ourselves, he *is Hamlet,* melancholy and all!"

That was an awful time when the dread news came to us. We were in Columbus. We had been horrified by the great crime at Washington. My room-mate and I had from our small earnings bought some black cotton, at a tripled price, as all the black material in the city was not sufficient to meet the demand, and as we tacked it about our one window, a man, passing, told us the assassin had been discovered, and that he was the actor Booth. Hattie laughed so she nearly swallowed the tack that, girl-like, she held between her lips, and I, after a laugh, told him it was a poor subject for a jest, and we went in. There was no store in Columbus then where play-books were sold, and as Mr. Ellsler had a very large and complete stage library, he frequently lent his books to us, and we would hurriedly copy out our lines and return the book for his own use. On that occasion he was going to study his part first and then leave the play with us as he passed going home. We heard his knock; I was busy pressing a bit of stage finery. Hattie opened the door, and then I heard her exclaiming: "Why — why — what?" I turned quickly. Mr. Ellsler was coming slowly into the room. He is a very dark man, but he was perfectly livid then, his lips even were blanched to the whiteness of his cheeks. His eyes were dreadful, they were so glassy and seemed so unseeing. He was devoted to his children, and all I could think of as likely

to bring such a look upon his face was disaster to one of them, and I cried, as I drew a chair to him, "What is it? Oh, what has happened to them?"

He sank down, he wiped his brow, he looked almost stupidly at me, then, very faintly, he said: "You — haven't — heard — anything?"

Like a flash Hattie's eyes and mine met; we thought of the supposed ill-timed jest of the stranger — my lips moved wordlessly. Hattie stammered: "A man, he lied though, said that Wilkes Booth — but he did lie — didn't he?" and in the same faint voice Mr. Ellsler answered, slowly: "No — no! he did not lie — it's too true!"

Down fell our heads and the waves of shame and sorrow seemed fairly to o'erwhelm us, and while our sobs filled the little room, Mr. Ellsler rose and laid two playbooks on the table. Then, while standing there, staring into space, I heard his far, faint voice, saying: "So great, so good a man destroyed, and by the hand of that unhappy boy! my God! my God!" He wiped his brow again and slowly left the house, apparently unconscious of our presence.

When we resumed our work — the theatre had closed because of the national calamity — many a painted cheek showed runnels made by bitter tears, and one old actress, with quivering lips, exclaimed: "One woe doth tread upon another's heel, so fast they follow!" but with no thought of quoting, and God knows the words expressed the situation perfectly.

Mrs. Ellsler, whom I never saw shed a tear for any sickness, sorrow, or trouble of her own, shed tears for the mad boy who had suddenly become the assassin of God's anointed — the great, the blameless Lincoln!

We crept about, quietly, everyone winced at the sound of the overture; it was as if one dead lay within the walls, one who belonged to us.

When the rumors about Booth being the murderer proved to be authentic, the police feared a possible out-

break of mob-feeling, and a demonstration against the theatre building, or against the actors individually; but we had been a decent, law-abiding, well-behaved people, liked and respected, so we were not made to suffer for the awful act of one of our number. Still, when the mass-meeting was held in front of the Capitol, there was much anxiety on the subject, and Mr. Ellsler urged all the company to keep away from it, lest their presence might arouse some ill-feeling. The crowd was immense; the sun had gloomed over, and the Capitol building, draped in black, loomed up with stern severity and that massive dignity only obtained by heavily columned buildings. The people surged like waves about the speakers' stand, and the policemen glanced anxiously toward the new theatre, not far away, and prayed that some bombastic, revengeful ruffian might not crop up from this mixed crowd of excited humanity to stir them to violence.

Three speakers, however, in their addresses had confined themselves to eulogizing the great dead. In life, Mr. Lincoln had been abused by many; in death, he was worshipped by all, and these speakers found their words of love and sorrow eagerly listened to, and made no harsh allusions to the profession from which the assassin sprang. And then an unknown man clambered up from the crowd to the portico platform and began to speak, without asking anyone's permission. He had a far-reaching voice — he had fire and "go."

"Here's the fellow to look out for!" said the policeman, and, sure enough, suddenly the dread word "theatre" was tossed into the air, and everyone was still in a moment, waiting for — what? I don't know what they hoped for, I do know what many feared; but this is what he said: "Yes, look over at our theatre and think of the little body of men and women there, who are to-day sore-hearted and cast down, who feel that they are looked at askant, because one of their number has committed that hideous crime! Think of what they have to

bear of shame and horror, and spare for them, too, a little pity!"

He paused; it had been a bold thing to do — to appeal for consideration for actors at such a time. The crowd swayed for a moment to and fro, a curious growling came from it, and then all heads turned toward the theatre. A faint cheer was given, and after that there was not the slightest allusion made to us — and verily we were grateful.

That the homely, tender-hearted "Father Abraham," rare combination of courage, justice, and humanity, died at an actor's hand will be a grief, a horror, and a shame to the profession forever — yet I cannot believe that John Wilkes Booth was "the leader of a band of bloody conspirators!"

Who shall draw a line and say: here genius ends and madness begins? There was that touch of "strangeness." In Edwin Booth it was a profound melancholy; in John it was an exaggeration of spirit, almost a wildness. There was the natural vanity of the actor, too, who craves a dramatic situation in real life. There was his passionate love and sympathy for the South — why, he was "easier to be played on than a pipe!"

Undoubtedly he conspired to kidnap the President — that would appeal to him, but after that I truly believe he was a tool, certainly he was no leader. Those who led him knew his courage, his belief in fate, his loyalty to his friends; and because they knew these things, he drew the lot, as it was meant he should from the first. Then, half mad, he accepted the part Fate cast him for — committed the monstrous crime and paid the awful price.

And since,

> "God moves in a mysterious way
> His wonders to perform,"

we venture to pray for His mercy upon the guilty soul! who may have repented and confessed his manifold sins

and offences during those awful hours of suffering before the end came.

And "God shutteth not up His mercies forever in displeasure!" We can only shiver and turn our thoughts away from the bright light that went out in such utter darkness. Poor, guilty, unhappy John Wilkes Booth!

CHAPTER FIFTEENTH

Mr. R. E. J. Miles—His two Horses, and our Woful Experience with the Substitute "Wild Horse of Tartary."

BUT there, just as I start to speak of my third season, I seem to look into a pair of big, mild eyes that say: "Can it be that you mean to pass me by? Do you forget that 'twas I who turned the great sensation scene of a play into a side-splitting farce?" And I shake my head and answer, truthfully: "I cannot forget, I shall never forget your work that night in Columbus, when you appeared as the 'fiery, untamed steed' (may Heaven forgive you) in 'Mazeppa.'"

Mr. Robert E. J. Miles, or "All the Alphabet Miles," as he was frequently called, was starring at that time in the Horse Drama, doing such plays as "The Cataract of the Ganges," "Mazeppa," "Sixteen-String Jack," etc. "Mazeppa" was the favorite in Columbus, and both the star and manager regretted they had billed the other plays in advance, as there would have been more money in "Mazeppa" alone. Mr. Miles carried with him two horses; the one for the "Wild Horse of Tartary" was an exquisitely formed, satin-coated creature, who looked wickedly at you from the tail of her blazing eye, who bared her teeth savagely, and struck out with her forefeet, as well as lashed out with the hind ones. When she came rearing, plunging, biting, snapping, whirling, and kicking her way on to the stage, the scarlet lining of her dilating nostrils and the foam flying from her mouth made our screams very natural ones, and the women in front used to huddle close to their companions, or even cover their faces.

One creature only did this beautiful vixen love — R. E. J. Miles. She fawned upon him like a dog; she did tricks like a dog for him, but she was a terror to the rest of mankind, and really it was a thrilling scene when *Mazeppa* was stripped and bound, his head tail-ward, his feet mane-ward, to the back of that maddened beast. She seemed to bite and tear at him, and when set free she stood straight up for a dreadful moment, in which she really endangered his life, then, with a wild neigh, she tore up the "runs," as if fiends pursued her, with the man stretched helplessly along her inky back. The curtain used to go up again and again — it was so very effective.

For a horse to get from the level stage clear above the "flies," under the very roof, the platforms or runs he mounts on have to zig-zag across the mountain background.

At each angle, out of sight of the audience, there is a railed platform, large enough for the horse to turn upon and make the next upward rush.

The other horse travelling with Mr. Miles was an entirely different proposition. He would have been described, according to the State he happened to be in, as a pie-bald, a skew-bald, a pinto, or a calico horse. He was very large, mostly of a satiny white, with big, absurdly shaped markings of bright bay. He was one of the breed of horses that in livery stables are always known as "Doctor" or "Judge." Benevolence beamed from his large, clear eyes, and he looked so mildly wise, one half expected to see him put on spectacles. The boy at the stable said one day, as he fed him: "I wouldn't wunder if this ol' parson of 'er a hoss asked a blessin' on them there oats — I wouldn't!"

I don't know whether old Bob — as he was called — had any speed or not, but if he had it was useless to him, for, alas! he was never allowed to reach the goal under any circumstances. He was always ridden by the villain, and therefore had to be overtaken, and besides that he

generally had to carry double, as the desperado usually fled holding the fainting heroine before him. Though old Bob successfully leaped chasms thus heavily handicapped — for truly he was a mighty jumper — nevertheless he was compelled to accept defeat, as Mr. Miles always came rushing up on the black horse to the rescue. He was very lucky indeed, if he didn't have to roll about and die, and he was a very impatient dead horse, often amusing the audience by lifting his head to see if the curtain was not down yet, and then dropping dead again with a sigh the whole house could hear.

By the way, "the house" is a theatrical term, meaning, on an actor's lips, "the audience." "The house did thus or so," "the house is behaving beautifully," "it's the most refined house you ever saw," "what a cold house"; and so on. I have but rarely heard either actor or actress refer to the "audience" — and after steadily using any term for years it is very hard to lay it aside, and I shall long remember the grim moment that followed on my remarking to my rector, "What a good house you had yesterday — it must have been a pleasure to pla—to, to—er, er, to address such an audi—er, that is, I mean congregation!" There was a moment of icy silence, then, being a human being as well as a wearer of the priestly collar, he set back his head and laughed a laugh that was good to hear.

Anyway, being continually pushed back into second place and compelled to listen to the unearned applause bestowed upon the beautiful black seemed to rob old Bob of all ambition professionally, and he simply became a *gourmet* and a glutton. He lived to eat. A woman in his eyes was a sort of perambulating store-house of cake, crackers, apples, sugar, etc.; only his love for children was disinterested. The moment he was loose he went off in search for children, no matter whose, so long as he found some; then down he would go on his knees, and wait to be pulled and patted. His silvery tail provided hundreds of horse-hair rings — and his habit of

gathering very small people up by their back breadths and carrying them a little way before dropping them, only filled the air with wild shrieks of laughter. In the theatre he walked sedately about before rehearsal began, and though we knew his attentions were entirely selfish, he was so urbane, so complaisant in his manner of going through us, that we could not resist his advances, and each day and night we packed our pockets and our muffs with such provender as women seldom carry about in their clothes. All our gloves smelled as though we worked at a cider-mill. While the play was going on old Bob spent a great part of his time standing on the first of those railed platforms, and as he was on the same side of the stage that the ladies' dressing-rooms were on, everyone of us had to pass him on our way to dress, and he demanded toll of all. Fruits, domestic or foreign, were received with gentle eagerness. Cake, crackers, and sugar, the velvety nose snuffed at them approvingly, and if a girl, believing herself late, tried to pass him swiftly by, his look of amazement was comical to behold, and in an instant his iron-shod foot was playing a veritable devil's tattoo on the resounding board platform, and if that failed to win attention, following her with his eyes, he lifted up his voice in a full-chested "neigh — hay — hay — *ha-ay!*" that brought her back in a hurry with her toll of sugar. And that pie-bald hypocrite would scrunch it with such a piteously ravenous air that the girl quite forgot the basilisk glare and satirical words the landlady directed against her recently-acquired sweet-tooth. My own landlady had, as early as Wednesday, covered the sugar-bowl and locked the pantry, but she left the salt-bag open, and I took on a full cargo of it twice a day, and old Bob showed such an absolute carnality of enjoyment in the eating of it that Mr. Miles became convinced that it had long been denied to him at the stables.

Then, late in the week, there came that dreadful night of disaster. I don't recall the name of the play, but in that one piece the beautiful, high-spirited black mare had

to carry double up the runs. John Carroll and Miss Lucy Cutler were the riders. Mr. Carroll claimed he could ride a little, and though he was afraid he was ashamed to say so. Mr. Miles said in the morning: "Now, if you are the least bit timid, Mr. Carroll, say so, and I will fasten the bridle-reins to the saddle-pommel and the Queen will carry you up as true as a die and as safe as a rock of her own accord; but if you are going to hold the bridle, for God's sake be careful! If it was old Bob, you could saw him as much as you liked and he would pay no attention, and hug the run for dear life; but the Queen, who has a tender mouth, is besides half mad with excitement at night, and a very slight pressure on the wrong rein will mean a forty or fifty-foot fall for you all!"

Miss Cutler expressed great fear, when Mr. Miles, surprisedly, said: "Why, you have ridden with me twice this week without a sign of fear?" "Oh, yes," she answered, "but *you* know what you are doing — you are a horseman."

It was an unfortunate speech, and in face of it Mr. Carroll's vanity would not allow him to admit his anxiety. "He could ride well enough — and he would handle the reins himself," he declared.

During the day his fears grew upon him. Foolishly and wickedly he resorted to spirits to try to build up some Dutch courage; and then, when the scene came on, half blind with fear and the liquor, which he was not used to, as he felt the fierce creature beneath them rushing furiously up the steep incline, a sort of madness came upon him. Without rhyme or reason he pulled desperately at the nigh rein and in the same breath their three bodies were hurling downward, like thunderbolts.

It was an awful sight! I looked at them as they descended, and for the fraction of a second they seemed to be suspended in the air. They were all upside down. They all, without turning or twisting, fell straight as

plummets — the horse, the same as the man and woman, had its feet straight in the air. Ugh! the striking — ugh! — never mind details! The curtain had been rushed down. Miss Cutler had been picked up, dazed, stunned, but without a mark. Mr. Carroll had crept away unaided amid the confusion, the sorrow, and tears, for the splendid Queen was doomed and done for! Though Mr. Miles had risked his own life in an awful leap to save her from falling through a trap, he could not save her life, and the almost human groan with which she dropped her lovely head upon her master's shoulder, and his streaming eyes as he tenderly wiped the blood from her velvety nostrils, made even the scene-shifters rub their eyes upon the backs of their hands. While the Queen was half carried and half crept to the fire-engine house next door (her stable was so far away), someone was going before the curtain, assuring the audience that the accident was very slight, and the lady and gentleman would both be before them presently, and the audience applauded in a rather doubtful manner, for several ladies had fainted, and the carrying out of a helpless person from a place of amusement always has a depressing effect upon the lookers-on. Meantime Mr. Carroll was getting his wrist bandaged and a cut on his face strapped up, while a basket of sawdust was hurriedly procured that certain cruel stains might be concealed. The orchestra played briskly and the play went on. That's the one thing we can be sure of in this world — that the play will go on. That night, late, the beautiful Queen died with her head resting on her master's knee.

Now "Mazeppa" was billed for the next night, and there were many consultations held in the office and on the stage. "The wild horse of Tartary" was gone. It was impossible to find a new horse in one day.

"Change the bill!" said Mr. Miles.

"And have an empty house," answered Mr. Ellsler.

"But what can I do for a horse?" asked R. E. J. M.

"Use old Bob," answered Mr. Ellsler.

"Good Lord!" groaned Bob's master. They argued long, but neither wanted to lose the good house, so the bill was allowed to stand, and "Mazeppa" was performed with old white Bob as the "Wild Horse of Tartary." Think of it, that ingratiating old Bob! That follower of women and playmate of children! Why, even the great bay blotches on his white old hide made one think of the circus, paper hoops, and *training,* rather than of wildness. Meaning to make him at least impatient and restless, he had been deprived of his supper, and the result was a settled gloom, an air of melancholy that made Mr. Miles swear under his breath every time he looked at him. There was a ring, known I believe as a Spanish ring, made with a sharp little spike attachment, and used sometimes by circus-men to stir up horses to a show of violence or of high spirits, and when a whip was not permissible. It could be resorted to without arousing any suspicion of cruelty, since the spike was on the under side and so out of sight. The man with the ring on his finger would stand by a horse, and resting his hand on the animal's neck, just at the most sensitive spot of his whole anatomy — the root or end of his mane — would close the hand suddenly, thus driving the spike into the flesh. It must have caused exquisite pain, and naturally the tormented animal rears and plunges. Sometimes they get effect enough by pricking the creatures on the shoulder only. On that night, Mr. Miles, after gazing at the mild and melancholy features of his new "Wild Horse of Tartary," went to his room and dug up from some trunk a Spanish ring. Calling one of the men who used to be dragged and thrashed about the stage by the black wild horse, he explained to him its use, ending with: "I hate to hurt the old fellow, so try him on the shoulder first, and if he dances about pretty lively, as I think he will, you need not prick his mane at all."

The play moved along nicely, the house was large, and seemed pleased. *Mazeppa* fell into his enemy's hands,

the sentence was pronounced, and the order followed: "Bring forth the fiery, untamed steed!"

The women began to draw close to their escorts; many of them remembered the biting, kicking entrance of the black, and were frightened beforehand. The orchestra responded with incidental creepy music, but — that was all. Over in the entrance, old Bob, surrounded by the four men who were supposed to restrain him, stood calmly. But those who sat in the left box heard "get-ups!" and "go-ons!" and the cluckings of many tongues. The mighty Khan of Tartary (who could not see that entrance) thought he had not been heard, and roared again: "Bring forth the fiery, untamed steed!" Another pause, the house tittered, then some one hit old Bob a crack across the rump with a whip, at which he gave a switch of his tail and gently ambled on the stage, stopping of his own accord at centre, and, lowering his head, he stretched his neck and sniffed at the leader of the orchestra, precisely as a dog sniffs at a stranger. It was deliciously ridiculous. We girls were supposed to scream with terror at the "wild horse," and, alas! we were only too obedient, crowding down at right, clinging together in attitudes of extremest fright, we shrieked and screeched until old Bob cocked up his ears and looked so astonished at our conduct that the audience simply rocked back and forth with laughter, and all the time *Mazeppa* was saying things that did not seem to be like prayers. Finally he gave orders for the men to surround Bob, which they did, and then the ring was used — the ring that was to make him dance about pretty lively. It pricked him on the shoulder, and the "wild horse" stood and switched his tail. It pricked him again — he switched his tail again. The men had by that time grown careless, and when the ring was finally used at his mane, he suddenly kicked one of them clear off the stage, and then resumed his unruffled calm. The public thought it was having fun all this time, but pretty soon it knew it. Nothing under heaven could disturb the gentle serenity

of that dog-like old horse. But when *Mazeppa* was brought forward to be bound upon his back, instead of pulling away, rearing, and fighting against the burden, his one and only quick movement was his violent effort to break away from his tormentors to welcome *Mazeppa* joyously.

"Oh!" groaned Miles, "kill him, somebody, before he kills me!"

While he was being bound on the wild horse's back, our instructions were to scream, therefore we screamed as before, and being on the verge of insanity, *Mazeppa* lifted his head from the horse's back, and said: "Oh, shut up — do!" The audience heard, and — well, it laughed some more, and then it discovered, when the men sprang away and left the horse free to dash madly up the mountain, that *Mazeppa* had kept one foot unbound to kick his horse with — and truly it did seem that the audience was going into convulsions. Such laughter, pierced every now and then by the shrill scream of hysteria. Then old Bob ambled up the first run all right, but, alas! for poor *Mazeppa*, as he reached the first turn-table, a woman passed on the way to her room, and hungry Bob instantly stopped to negotiate a loan in sugar. Oh, it was dreadful, the wait, and when finally he reappeared, trotting — yes, trotting up the next run, Mr. Miles's foot could be plainly seen, kicking with the regularity of a piston-rod, while his remarks were — well, they were irregular in the extreme.

Of course the play was hopelessly ruined; the audience laughed at the slightest mention of the "wild horse," and when, broken and exhausted, the shepherds find them both lying at the foot of the mountain, the house seemed to shake with laughter.

When the play was at last over, old white Bob walked over to his master and mumbled his hand. Mr. Miles pushed him away with pretended anger, crying: "You infernal old idiot, I'd sell you for a three-cent stamp with gum on it!"

Bob looked hard at him a moment, then he calmly crossed behind him and mumbled his other hand, and Mr. Miles pulled his ears, and said that "he himself was the idiot for expecting an untrained, unrehearsed horse to play such a part," and old Bob agreeing with him perfectly, they were, as always, at peace with each other.

CHAPTER SIXTEENTH

I perform a Remarkable Feat, I Study *King Charles* in One Afternoon and Play Without a Rehearsal — Mrs. D. P. Bowers makes Odd Revelation.

ALREADY in that third season my position had become an anomalous one, from that occasion when, because of sickness, I had in one afternoon studied, letter perfect, the part of *King Charles* in "Faint Heart Never Won Fair Lady," and played it in borrowed clothes and without any rehearsal whatever, other than finding the situations plainly marked in the book. It was an astonishing thing to do, and nearly everyone had a kind word for me. The stage manager, or rather the prompter, for Mr. Ellsler was his own stage manager, patted me on the shoulder and said: "'Pon my soul, girl, you're a wonder! I think pretty well of my own study, but you can beat me. You never missed a word, and besides that I've seen the part played worse many a time. I don't know what to say to you, my dear, but a girl that can do that can do most anything."

Ah, yes! and that was just what the powers that were seemed to think — that I could do almost anything, for from that day I became a sort of dramatic scape-goat, to play the parts of the sick, the halt, the cross, the tricky, for whenever an actor or actress turns up with a remarkable study — the ability to learn almost any part in a given time — he or she is bound to be "put upon." Sickness will increase, tempers will get shorter, airs of superiority will be assumed, all because there is someone ready to play the obnoxious part, someone ready to rush into the breach and prevent the changing of the "bill."

So often was I playing parts, thus leaving only two in the ballet, that another girl was engaged. Thus to Hattie, Annie, and Clara there was added Mary. And lo! in this young woman I recognized a friend of my youth. I had known her but two days, but I could never forget the only child I had ever had a play with. She had parted from me in wrath because, after playing house-keeping all morning in the yard, I had refused to eat a clay dumpling she had made, with a nice green clover-leaf in its middle. She threw the dumpling at me, roaring like a little bull calf, and twisting a dirty small fist into each dry eye, she waddled off home, leaving me, finger in mouth, gazing in pained amazement after her, until my fat little legs suddenly gave way, as was their wont in moments of great emotion, and sat me unwillingly but flatly down upon the ground, where I remained, looking gravely at them and wondering what they did it for — and now here we were together again.

Of course this playing of many parts was, in a certain way, an advantage to me, and I appreciated it; but there can be too much even of a good thing. That I got little pay for all this work was nothing to me, I was glad to do it for the experience it gave me, but when I was forced to appear ridiculous through my inability to dress the parts correctly I suffered cruelly. Once in a while, as in the case of *King Charles,* I could get a costume from the theatre wardrobe, where the yellow plush breeches lived when not engaged in desolating my young life, but, alas! here, as everywhere, the man is the favored party, and the theatre wardrobe contains only masculine garments; the women must provide everything for themselves. Then, too, one is never too young or too insignificant to feel an injustice.

I recall, very distinctly, having to go on for *Lady Anne* in " Richard III.," with a rather unimportant star. Now had I " held a position," as the term goes, that part would, out of courtesy, have belonged to me for the rest of the season, unless I chose to offer it back to the woman

I had obliged; but being only a ballet-girl I did well enough for the *Lady Anne* of an unimportant star, but when a more popular *Richard* appeared upon the scene, *Lady Anne* was immediately reclaimed, and I traipsed again behind the coffin, and with the rest of the ballet was witness to that most savage fling of Shakespeare against a vain, inconsequential womanhood as personified in *Lady Anne,* who, standing by her coffined, murdered dead, eagerly drinks in the flattery offered by the murderer's self. It is a courtship all dagger-pierced and reeking with innocent blood — monstrous and revolting! One would like to know who the woman was whose incredible vanity and levity so worked upon the master's mind that he produced this tragic caricature. Who was the woman who inspired great Shakespeare's one unnatural scene? Come, antiquaries, *cherchez la femme!*

I suffered most when I had to play some lady of quality, for what, in heaven's name, had I to dress a lady in? Five dollars a week to live on, to dress myself on, and to provide stage wardrobe! Many a bitter tear I shed. And then there was the surprise of the stars, when after playing an important part one night, they suddenly recognized me the next standing in the crowd of peasants or seated at *Macbeth's* disheartening banquet.

Their comments used to be very caustic sometimes, and they almost, without exception, advised me to rebel, to go and demand freedom from the ballet, or at least salary enough to dress the parts given me to play. But those long years of childish thraldom had left their mark — I could not assert myself, an overwhelming shame came upon me, even at the thought of asking to be advanced. So I went on playing boys and second old women, singing songs when forced to it, going on for poor leading parts even, for the leading lady being the manager's wife rarely played parts with women stars, and then between times dropping back into the ballet and standing about in crowds or taking part in a village dance.

It was a queer position and no mistake. Many stars

had grown to know me, and often on Monday morning he or she would come over to our group and shake hands kindly, to my great pleasure. One morning, while we were rehearsing "Lady Audley's Secret," Mrs. Bowers, whom I greatly admired, came over to me, and remarked: "You hard-hearted little wretch! I've been watching you; you are treating that boy shamefully! Don't you know Murdoch is a gentleman?"

I was surprised, and rather quickly answered: "Well, have I treated him as if he were not a gentleman?"

She was called just then, but when the act was over she came to me again, and taking my hand in her right, she began beating it up and down upon her left: "You are not vexed, are you?" she asked. "Don't be; I only wonder how you can do it, and you are so young! Why," she sighed, from her very soul it seemed to me, "Why," she went on, "ever since I was fourteen years old I have been loving some man who has not loved me!" Tears rose thickly into her eyes. "I am always laying my heart down for some man to trample on!" She glanced toward Mr. McCollom (he who was six feet tall and handsome), a little smile trembled on her lips. I caught her fingers on a swift impulse and squeezed them, she squeezed back answeringly; we understood each other, she was casting her heart down again, unasked. Her eyes came back to me. "Yours is the best way, but I'm too old to learn now, I shall have to go on seeking — always seeking!"

"And finding, surely finding!" I answered, honestly, for I could not imagine anyone resisting her.

"Do you think so?" she said, eagerly; then, rather sadly, she added: "Still it would be nice to be sought once, instead of always seeking."

Poor woman! Charming actress as she was, she did not exaggerate in declaring she was always casting her heart before someone. She married Mr. McCollom, and lived with him in adoring affection till death took him.

The last time I saw her she was my guest here at "The

Pines," and as I fastened a great hibiscus flower above her ear, in Spanish fashion, she remarked:

"How little you have changed in all these years! I'll wager your heart is without a scar, while if you could only see mine," she laughed, "it's like an old bit of tinware — so battered, and bent, and dented!"

CHAPTER SEVENTEENTH

Through Devotion to my Friend, I Jeopardize my Reputation — I Own a Baby on Shares — Miss Western's Pathetic Speech.

I HAD at that time a friend — a rare possession that. "The ideal of friendship," says Madame Switchine, "is to feel as one while remaining two," which is a precise description of the condition of mind and feeling of Mrs. Mollie Ogden and myself. She did not act, but her husband did, and I saw her every night, nearly every morning, and when work permitted we visited one another in the afternoons. There was but one kind of cake on the market that I liked, and that cake, with coffee, was always offered for my refreshment when I was her guest. When she was mine the festal board was furnished forth with green tea, of which she was inordinately fond, and oysters stewed in their own can and served in two mugs; the one announcing, in ostentatious gold letters, that I was "a good girl," was naturally at the service of my guest, while the plain stone-china affair, from the toilet-table, answered my purposes. With what happy eagerness we prepared for those absurd banquets, which we heartily enjoyed, since we were boarders, and always hungry — and how we talked! Of what? Why, good heaven! did I not hold a membership in the library, and were we not both lightning-quick readers? Why, we had the whole library to talk over; besides, there was the country to save! and as Mollie didn't really know one party from the other, she felt herself particularly fitted for the task of settling public questions.

Then, suddenly, she began to expect another visitor

— a *wee* visitor, whom we hoped would remain permanently, and, goodness mercy! I nearly lost my reputation through the chambermaid finding in my work-basket some half-embroidered, tiny, tiny jackets. Whereupon she announced to the servants, in full assembly, that I had too soft a tongue, and was deeper than the sea, but *she* had her eyes open, and, judging from what she found in my work-basket, I was either going to buy a monkey for a pet, or I had thrown away my character completely.

Mrs. Ogden was with me when the landlady, stony-eyed and rattling with starch and rectitude, came to inquire into the contents of my work-basket. Her call was brief, but satisfactory, and shortly after her exit we heard her, at the top of her lungs, giving me a clean bill of health — morally speaking — and denouncing the prying curiosity of the maids. But we had had a scare, and Mollie implored me either not to help her any more or to lock up my work-basket.

"Oh, no," I said, "I'll rest my head upon the chambermaid's breast and confide all my intentions to her, then surely my character will be safe."

However, when the *wee* stranger arrived, she might well have wondered whom she belonged to. At all events she "goo-gooed and gurgled," and smiled her funny three-cornered smile at me as readily as at her mother, and my friendly rights in her were so far recognized by others that questions about her were often put to me in her mother's very presence, who laughingly declared that only in bed with the light out did she feel absolutely sure that the baby was hers.

Mollie used to say the only really foolish thing she ever caught me in was "Protestantism." It was a great grief to us all that I could not be godmother, but though baby had a Protestant father, the Church flatly refused to wink at a godmother of that forsaken race.

When, in God's good time, a tiny sister came to baby, she was called Clara, but my friend had made a solemn vow before the altar, at the ripe age of seven years, to

name her first child Genevieve, and she, to quote her husband, "being a Roman Catholic as well as a little idiot," faithfully kept her vow, and our partnership's baby was loaded up with a name that each year proved more unsuitable, for a more un-Genevieve-like Genevieve never lived. All of which goes to prove how unwise it is to assume family cares and duties before the arrival of the family.

Miss Lucille Western was playing an engagement in Cleveland when "our baby" was a few months old. My friend and I were both her ardent admirers. I don't know why it has arisen, this fashion to sneer more or less openly at Miss Western's work. If a woman who charms the eye can also thrill you, repel you, touch you to tears, provoke you to laughter by her acting, she surely merits the term "great actress." Well, now, who can deny that she did all these things? Why else did the people pack her houses season after season? It was not her looks, for if the perfect and unblemished beauty of her lovely sister Helen could not draw a big house, what could you expect from the inspired irregularity of Lucille's face? How alive she was! She was not quite tall enough for the amount of fine firm flesh her frame then carried — but she laced, and she was grace personified.

She was a born actress; she knew nothing else in all the world. There is a certain tang of wildness in all things natural. Dear gods! Think what the wild strawberry loses in cultivation! Half the fascination of the adorable Jacqueminot rose comes from the wild scent of thorn and earth plainly underlying the rose *attar* above. And this actress, with all her lack of polish, knew how to interpret a woman's heart, even if she missed her best manner. For in all she did there was just a touch of extravagance — a hint of lawless, unrestrained passion. There was something tropical about her, she always suggested the scarlet tanager, the jeweled dragon-fly, the pomegranate flower, or the scentless splendor of our wild marshmallow.

In "Lucretia Borgia" she presented the most perfect picture of opulent, insolent beauty that I ever saw, while her "Leah, the Forsaken" was absolutely Hebraic; and in the first scene, where she was pursued and brought to bay by the Christian mob, her attitude, as she silently eyed her foes, her face filled both with wild terror and fierce contempt, was a thing to thrill any audience, and always received hearty applause.

So far as looks went, she was seen to least advantage in her greatest money-maker, "East Lynne." Oh, dear! oh, dear! the tears that were shed over that dreadful play, and how many I contributed myself! I would stand looking on from the entrance, after my short part was over, and when she cried out: "Oh, why don't I die! My God! why *don't* I die?" I would lay my head against the nearest scene and simply howl like a broken-hearted young puppy. I couldn't help it, neither could those in front help weeping — more decorously perhaps, because they were older and had their good clothes on.

Now this brilliant and successful actress was not very happy — few are, for one reason or another — but she worked much harder than most women, and naturally liked to have some return for her work; therefore she must have found it depressing, at least, when her husband formed the habit of counting up the house by eye (he could come to within $5 of the money contents of the house any night in this way), and then going out and losing the full amount of her share in gambling. It was cruel, and it was but one of the degradations put upon her. Lucille did not know how to bear her troubles. She wept and used herself up. Then, to get through her heavy night's work, she took a stimulant. Oh, poor soul! poor soul! though the audience knew nothing, the people about her knew she was not her best self; and she knew they knew it, and was made sore ashamed and miserable. Her husband, on one occasion, had gambled away every cent of three nights' work. On the fourth she had had

resource to a stimulant, and on the fifth she was cast down, silent, miserable, and humiliated.

That night "our baby" came to the theatre. She was one of those aggressively sociable infants, who will reach out and grasp a strange whisker rather than remain unnoticed. She had pretty little, straight features and small, bright eyes that were fairly purply blue. I had her — of course in so public a place it was my right to have her — she was over my shoulder. I was standing near the star-room. The door opened and next moment I heard a long, low, "O-o-h!" and then again, "O-o-h! a — baby, and awake! and the peace of heaven yet in its eyes!"

I turned my head to look at Miss Western, and her face quickened my heart. Her glowing eyes were fastened upon "baby," with just the rapt, uplifted look one sees at times before some Roman Catholic altar. It was beautiful! She gave a little start and exclaimed, as at a wonder: "Its hand! oh, its tiny, tiny hand!" Just with the very tip of her forefinger she touched it, and "baby" promptly grasped the finger and gurgled cordially. Her face flushed red, she gave a gasp: "Good God!" she cried, "it's touching me, me! It *is*, see — *see!*" Sudden tears slipped down her cheeks. "Blessed God!" she cried, "if you had but sent me such a one, all would have been different! I could never bring disgrace or shame on a precious thing like this!"

As she raised the tiny morsel of a hand to her lips the prompter sharply called: "The stage waits, Miss Western!" and she was gone.

Poor, ill-guided, unhappy woman! it was always and only the stage that waited Miss Western.

CHAPTER EIGHTEENTH

Mr. Charles W. Couldock — His Daughter Eliza and his Many Peculiarities.

THERE was one star who came to us every season with the regularity and certainty of the equinoctial storm, and when they arrived together, as they frequently did, we all felt the conjunction to be peculiarly appropriate. He was neither young nor good-looking, yet no one could truthfully assert that his engagements were lacking in interest — indeed, some actors found him lively in the extreme. Charles W. Couldock was an Englishman by birth, and had come to this country with the great Cushman. He was a man of unquestionable integrity — honorable, truthful, warm-hearted; but being of a naturally quick and irritable temper, instead of trying to control it, he yielded himself up to every impulse of vexation or annoyance, while with ever-growing violence he made mountains out of mole-hills, and when he had just cause for anger he burst into paroxysms of rage, even of ferocity, that, had they not been half unconscious acting, must have landed him in a mad-house out of consideration for the safety of others; while, worst of all, like too many of his great nation, he was profane almost beyond belief; and profanity, always painfully repellent and shocking, is doubly so when it comes from the lips of one whose silvering hair shows his days have already been long in the land of the God whom he is defying. And yet when Mr. Couldock ceased to use plain, every-day oaths, and brought forth some home-made ones, they were oaths of such intricate construction, such grotesque termination, that they wrung a startled laugh from the most unwilling lip.

In personal appearance he was the beau-ideal wealthy farmer. He was squarely, solidly built, of medium height — never fat. His square, deeply-lined, even-furrowed face was clean shaven. His head, a little bald on top, had a thin covering of curly gray hair, which he wore a trifle long; while his suit of black cloth — always a size or two too large for him — and his never-changing big hat of black felt were excuse enough for any man's asking him about the state of the crops — which they often did, and were generally urgently invited to go to the hottest Hades for their pains.

On his brow there was a deep and permanent scowl that seemed cut there to the very bone. Two deep, heavy lines ran from the sides of his nose to the corners of his lips, where they suddenly became deeper before continuing down toward his chin, while a strong cast in one of his steely-blue eyes gave a touch of malevolence to the severity of his face.

The strong point of his acting was in the expression of intense emotion — particularly grief or frenzied rage. He was utterly lacking in dignity, courtliness, or subtlety. He was best as a rustic, and he was the only creature I ever saw who could "snuffle" without being absurd or offensive.

Generally, if anything went wrong, Mr. Couldock's rage broke forth on the instant, but he had been known to keep a rod in pickle for a day or more, as in the case of a friend of mine — at least it was the husband of my friend Mollie. He had played *Salanio* in "The Merchant of Venice," and in some way had offended the star, who cursed him *sotto voce* at the moment of the offence, and then seemed to forget all about the matter. Next morning, at rehearsal, nothing was said till its close, when Mr. Couldock quite quietly asked my friend to look in at his dressing-room that evening before the play began.

Poor John was uneasy all the afternoon, still he drew some comfort from the calmness of Mr. Couldock's manner. Evening came, John was before the bar. The star

seemed particularly gentle — he removed his coat leisurely and said:

"You played *Salanio* last night?"

"Yes, sir."

"And your name is — er?"

"Ogden, sir," replied John.

"Ah, yes, Ogden. Well, how long have you been at it, Ogden?"

"About three years," answered the now confident and composed prisoner at the bar.

"Three years? huh! Well, will you let me give you a bit of advice, Ogden?"

"Why, yes, sir, I shall be glad to listen to any advice from you," earnestly protested the infatuated one.

"Well," snapped the star, rather sharply, "I want you to *follow it* as well as to listen to it. Now you take some money — you *have* some money saved, I suppose?"

"Oh, yes, sir!" answered John.

"Well, then," he turned his queer eye on him, he took a long, full breath, "well, then, you just get some of that money, and you go to a hardware store," his rage was rising visibly, "and you buy a good sharp hatchet, and then I want you to take it home and chop your d—d fool head off!" and ripping off his vest he made a furious charge upon the almost paralyzed Ogden, clouting him from the room, while roaring like a bull.

He had played one set of plays so long he had lost the power to study quickly, and he was so ill-advised once as to attempt a new part, on rather short notice. The play was a miserable jumble of impossible situations and strained, high-flown language; and, of all absurd things, Mr. Couldock attempted to play a young Irish hero, with a love-scene — in fact he was supposed to represent the young Emmet. Dear heaven! what a sight he was, in those buckskin riding breeches (his legs were not beyond suspicion as to their straightness), that cutaway green coat, and the dinky little conical hat, looking so maliciously "larky," perched over his fiercest eye. He forgot

all his lines, but he never forgot his profanity, and that night it took on a wild originality that was simply convulsing. In one scene he had to promise to save his beloved Ireland. He quite forgot the speech, and being reminded of it by the prompter, he roared at the top of his voice: "I don't care! what the devil's Ireland to me! d—n Ireland! I wish it and the man that wrote this play were both at the bottom of the sea, with cock-eyed sharks eatin' 'em!" Then he suddenly pulled out his part and began to search wildly for his next scene, that he might try to recall his lines; at this he continued till he was called to go upon the stage, then he made a rush, and in a moment the house was laughing.

"Oh, dear! what was it?" Everyone ran to peep on the stage. Mr. Couldock had discovered they were laughing at him, and was becoming recklessly furious. Mr. Ellsler, fearing he would insult the people, hastily rang down the curtain. Then Mr. Couldock, as *Emmet*, faced round to us, and the laughter was explained. When he was reading over his part he had put on a big pair of spectacles, and when he hurried on he simply pushed them up and left them there. A young lover with big, old-fashioned spectacles on his forehead and a perky little conical hat looking down on them was certainly an unusual sight and an amusing one.

One of Mr. Couldock's most marked characteristics was the amazingly high pitch of his voice in speaking. Anyone who has heard two men trying to converse across a large open field has had a good illustration of his style of intonation, which anger raised to a perfect shriek. The most shocking exhibition of rage I ever saw came from him during a performance of "Louis XI." Annie and I, as pages, were standing each side of the throne, holding large red cushions against our stomachs. My cushion supported a big gilded key, until, in my fright, I actually shook it off, for when Mr. Couldock's passion came upon him on the stage his violence created sad havoc in the memories of the actors. The audience, too,

could hear many of his jibes and oaths, and Mr. Ellsler was very angry about it, for in spite of his affection for the man, he drew the line at the insulting of the audience; therefore, when the curtain fell, Mr. Ellsler said: "Charley, this won't do! you *must* control yourself in the presence of the public!"

The interference seemed to drive him mad. A volley of oaths, inconceivably blasphemous, came from his lips, and then, with a bound, he seized the manuscript (it was not a published play then, and the manuscript was valuable) and tore it right down the centre. Mr. Ellsler and the prompter caught his right hand, trying to save the play, but while they held that he lifted the rest of the manuscript and tore it to pieces with his teeth, growling and snarling like a savage animal. Then he broke away and rushed frantically up-stairs to Mr. Ellsler's dressing-room, where he locked himself in. When it was time to call the next act he gave no answer to their knocking, though he could be heard swearing and raving within. Mr. Ellsler finally burst open the door, and there stood *Louis XI.* in his under-garments, and his clothing — where? It was a tiny room, nevertheless no velvet costume could be found. The window, a long French one, was nailed up for winter — the clothes had not been thrown out. There was no stove yet, they had not been burned; where then were they? Another overture was played. Some of Mr. Ellsler's clothes were hastily brought — a nondescript covering for his royal nakedness was found, and he went on to finish the performance somehow, while the prompter guessed at the ringing down of the curtain, for there was no manuscript to guide him.

Truly it had been a most humiliating spectacle. Many weeks later, when stoves were going up, the men discovered that someone had torn away the tin protector from the stove-pipe hole in Mr. Ellsler's room, and when they were replacing it they found, crammed tightly into a narrow space between the lath and plastering of the

two rooms, the velvet garments of *Louis XI.*, even to the cap with the leaden images. How he had discovered the place no one knows, and when his rage had passed he could not remember what he had done, but he could play *Louis* no more that season.

We were always pleased when Mr. Couldock was accompanied by his daughter. Eliza Couldock, bearing an absurdly marked resemblance to her father, of course could not be pretty. The thin, curly hair, the fixed frown, the deep lines of nose and mouth, the square, flat figure, all made of her a slightly softened *replica* of the old gentleman. Her teeth were pretty, though, and her hazel eyes were very brilliant. She was well read, clever, and witty, and her affectionate devotion to her father knew no bounds; yet as she had a keen sense of the ridiculous, no eccentricity, no *grotesquerie* of his escaped her laughing, hawk-keen eye, and sometimes when talking to old friends, like Mr. and Mrs. Ellsler, she would tell tales of "poor pa" that were exceedingly funny.

They went to California — a great undertaking then, as the Pacific Railroad was not completed, and they were most unsuccessful during their entire stay here. Eliza told one day of how a certain school-principal in 'Frisco had met her father after a performance to a miserable house, and with frightful bad taste had asked Mr. Couldock how he accounted for the failure of his engagement, and that gentleman snarled out: "I don't try to account for it at all! I leave that work for the people who ask fool questions. If I only have one d—n cent in my pocket I don't try to account for not having another d—n cent to rub against it!" And Eliza added, in pained tones: "that principal had meant to ask 'poor pa' to come and speak to the dear little boys in his school, but after that he didn't — wasn't it odd?"

As Mr. Couldock was heard approaching that morning, his daughter quickly whispered to Mrs. Ellsler: "Ask pa how he liked California?"

And after "good-mornings" were exchanged, the ques-

tion was put, and incidentally the red rag brought the mad bull into action.

"I wouldn't give a d—n for the whole d—d State!" roared Mr. Couldock, while his daughter pushed his hair behind his ears, and mildly said: "Pa's always so emphatic about California."

"Yes!" shouted the old man, "and so would you be if you wore breeches and dared to speak the truth! You see," he went on, "no one ever gave me even a hint, and it was just my cursed luck to go overland, risking my own d—n skin and Eliza's too, and it seems that those God-forsaken duffers look upon anyone coming to them by the overland route as a sort of outcast tramp. In fact, that's entering by the back-kitchen door to San Francisco. You ought to go by sea, and come in at the front door of their blasted, stuck-up little city if you're to put any of their money in your purse or be allowed to keep any of your own."

One morning we girls were boasting among ourselves of our abilities as packers. Hattie, my room-mate, thought she could pack a trunk the quickest, while I claimed I could pack one with the least injury to the contents. Miss Couldock, hearing us, exclaimed, laughingly: "Oh, girls, poor pa could give you all points at that work, while his manner of *un*packing is so original, so swift, and so thorough, I think I should explain it to you. First, I must tell you, that that slight bow to pa's legs is an annoyance to him on every occasion of life, save that of unpacking his trunks, then it is of great convenience. You see, the trunks are brought up and dumped in the room. They don't have any locks, because 'poor pa,' always losing the keys, has to kick the locks off during the first week that he owns them. Next they are unstrapped and opened, then pa yanks off the top spread from the bed and lays it open on the middle of the floor; then he takes his place before the first trunk, straddles his feet well apart (see, now, how useful that bow becomes), and fires every single garment the trunk

contains between his legs and on to the quilt. Having emptied the trunks with lightning swiftness, he claps down their covers for the rest of the week. Whenever he wants anything for the theatre, he straddles the pile on the quilt, and paws it wildly, but rapidly over, pulling out a shoulder-cape here, a doublet yonder, one boot from the top and its mate from the bottom — all these he pitches into the theatre-basket, and is happy for *that* day. When the week is over, pa dumps into the nearest trunk all it will hold, and what's left over is pitched *en masse* into the next one. If there is any difficulty in closing the trunks he don't waste time in trying to rearrange the things. There is such beautiful simplicity in all pa's actions, he just gets up and walks — well, perhaps stamps a little on the contents, until the lid closes quite nicely, for he is a very quick packer, is pa, though it's just possible that his method in some degree may explain his generally rumpled appearance on the stage. What should *you* think about it, girls?"

The old gentleman was always very kind to me and had the oddest pet name for me I ever heard. He used to hail me with: "Where's my crummie girl? Well, Crummy, how are you?"

In answer to my amazed look, he explained one day that it was a Yorkshire term, and meant "plump or round faced." The only time he ever cursed me was when he gave me the cue in the wrong place, as he openly admitted, and I went on too soon in consequence. Aside, he swore so the air seemed blue — my legs shook under me. I did not know whether to speak or not. He rose, and putting his arm about me, he led me off the stage (I was playing his daughter), and as we crossed the stage, this is what he said — the words in parentheses being asides to me, the other words being aloud for the audience:

"(What in h—ll!) My little one! (you double d—n fool!) My bird, what brings you here? (Yes, what the blankety, blankety, blanknation does bring you here,

crummie girl?) Get back to your nest, dearie! (and stay there, d—n you!)" as he gently pushed me off the stage. Next day when the prompter showed him his error he admitted it at once.

He knew much sorrow and trouble, and before that last long streak of good fortune came to him, in New York, in "Hazel Kirke," he knew a time of bitter poverty. Eliza had died — a sweet and noble woman — and the loss was terrible to him. I was just winning success in the East when I was dumfounded one day at seeing Mr. Couldock standing, bowed and broken, before me, asking me for help.

A star — dear God! could such things happen to a star? I was so hurt for him, for his broken pride. When I could speak, I simply told him my salary, and that two (my mother and myself) were trying to live on it. "Oh!" he cried, "crummie girl, why don't you demand your rights; your name is on everyone's lips, yet you are hungry! Shall I speak for you?"

Poor old gentleman, I could not let him go empty away. I took one-half of my rent-money and handed it to him. I dared not ask my landlady to favor me further than that. His face lighted up radiantly — it might have been hundreds from his look. "Dearie!" he said, "I'll pay this back to the penny. You can ill spare it, I see that, crummie girl, but, oh, my lass, it's worse to see another hungry than it is to hunger yourself. I'll pay it back!" His eyes filled, he paused long, then he said, pathetically: "Some time, crummie girl, some time!"

My landlady granted me grace. Months passed away — many of them — waves went over me sometimes, but they receded before my breath was quite gone. Things were bettering a little, and then one day, when I came home from work, a man had called in my absence — an old man, who had left this little packet, and, oh! he had been so anxious for its safety!

I opened it to find $25, all in bills of ones and twos.

Such a pathetic story those small bills told — they were for the crummie girl, "With the thanks of the obliged, Charles W. Couldock."

He had kept his word; he was the only man in this profession who ever repaid me one dollar of borrowed money. Mr. Couldock was like some late-ripening fruit that requires a touch of frost for its sweetening. In his old age he mellowed, he became chaste of speech, his acting of strong, lovable old men was admirable. He was honored by his profession in life and honestly mourned in death — he would not have asked more.

CHAPTER NINETEENTH

I Come to a Turning-Point in my Dramatic Life—I play my First Crying Part with Miss Sallie St. Clair.

WE were in Columbus; things were moving along smoothly and quietly, when suddenly that incident occurred which had the power to change completely my dramatic prospects, while at the same time it convinced the people about me, in theatrical parlance, my head was "well screwed on," meaning it was not to be turned by praise.

Miss Sallie St. Clair was the star of the week, and she was billed to appear on Friday and Saturday nights in an adaptation of "La Maison Rouge." I am not certain as to the title she gave it, but I think it was "The Lone House on the Bridge." She was to play the dual characters — a count and a gypsy boy. The leading female part Mrs. Ellsler declined, because she would not play second to a woman. The young lady who had been engaged for the juvenile business (which comes between leading parts and walking ladies) had a very poor study, and tearfully declared she simply *could* not study the part in time — "No — no! she co — co — could not, so now!"

There, then, was Blanche's chance. The part was sentimental, tearful, and declamatory at the last, a good part — indeed, what is vulgarly known to-day as a "fat" part, "fat" meaning lines sure to provoke applause.

Mrs. Bradshaw, who was herself ever ready to oblige her manager, could not serve him in this instance, as the part was that of a very young heroine, but she gladly offered her daughter's services in the emergency. So sending for her to come to the theatre, the mother awaited her arrival. She was very ambitious for Blanche, who

had absolutely no ambition for herself, outside of music, and here was the double opportunity of playing a leading part, next to the star, and of obliging the manager just at the time when contracts for the next season were in order of consideration. No girl could help grasping at it eagerly, and while Blanche studied the part, she, the mother, would baste up some breadths of satin she had by her into a court dress. As she thus happily planned it all Blanche sauntered in to inform her mother and her manager that she would not do the part. *Would* not, mind you; she did not condescend to claim she *could* not. Poor Mrs. Bradshaw drew her heavy veil over her face with a shaking hand and moved silently away, only waiting to reach the friendly privacy of her own room before yielding to the tears caused by this cruel indifference to her wishes and to their mutual welfare.

Mr. Ellsler then tried, in vain, to induce Blanche to undertake the part. He tried to bribe her, promising certain gifts. He tried to arouse her pride — he absolutely commanded her to take the part.

"Oh, very well, if you like," she answered, "but I'll spoil the play if I do, you know!" And indeed he did "know" what she was capable of in the line of mischief; and, knowing, gave her up in angry despair. There was then but one chance left for the production of the play, to give the part to one of the ballet-girls.

And Mr. Ellsler, who felt a strong friendship for the brave, hard-working, much-enduring Miss St. Clair and her devoted if eccentric husband, said, gently: "I'm sorry, Sallie, but it's no fault of mine; you know I can't give memories to these two women, who say they can't study the part. The girl I want to offer it to now will speak the words perfectly to the last letter, and that's all we can expect of her, but that's better than changing the bill."

Then I was called. I adored Miss St. Clair, as everyone else did. I heard, I saw the long part, but instead of the instant smiling assent Mr. Ellsler expected, I

shook my head silently. Miss St. Clair groaned, Mr. Barras snuffled loudly, and stammered: "W — what did you expect, if the others can't study it, how can she?"

"Oh," I answered, "I can study the lines, Mr. Barras, but," big tears came into my eyes, I was so sorry to disappoint the lovely blond star, "it's — it's a crying part — a great lady and a crying part! I — I — oh, if you please, I can't cry. I can laugh and dance and sing and scold, but I don't know how to cry; and look here," I caught up the part and fluttered over the leaves and pointed to the oft-repeated word "weeps — weeps," "and, Miss St. Clair," I excitedly finished, "I can't weep, and I won't have a stitch of clothes for her back either!"

All three hearers burst out laughing. Miss St. Clair was in radiant good-humor in an instant. She dried my eyes, and said: "Child, if you really can study that long part, and just walk through it after only one rehearsal, you will be a very clever little girl. You need not try to act, just give me the lines and hold a handkerchief to your eyes when tears are called for. You shall have one of my prettiest dresses for the court scene, and I guess you have a white muslin of your own for the garden scene, have not you?"

I had, yes, and so I went home, heavy-hearted, to undertake the study of my first crying part.

Good heavens! In spite of this memory, I catch myself wondering was there ever a *first one* — did I ever do anything else. For it seems to me I have cried steadily through all the years of my dramatic life. Tears gentle, regretful; tears petulant, fretful; tears stormy, passionate; tears slow, despairing; with a light patter, now and then, of my own particular brand, kept for the expression of my own personal troubles — very bitter, briny tears they are, and I find that a very few answer my purpose nicely.

Miss St. Clair, who was tall as well as fair, had measured the length of my skirt in front, so that she might have one of her dresses shortened for me during the

afternoon, thus leaving me all the time possible for study. After I had learned the words by heart, I began to study out the character. It was an excellent acting part, very sweet and tenderly pathetic in the first act, very passionate and fierce in the second, and the better I understood the requirements of the part, the greater became my terror of it. My room-mate tried to comfort me. "Think," she cried, "of wearing one of Miss St. Clair's own dresses! I'll wager it will be an awful nice one, too, since you are obliging her, and she is always kind, anyway."

But that leaden weight at my heart was too great for gratified vanity to lift. "Bother the tears," she added; "I heard Mr. Barras say the tears of all actresses were in their handkerchiefs."

"Oh, yes, I heard him, too," I answered, "but he was just talking for effect. There must be something else, something more. You can't move anyone's heart by showing a handkerchief."

"Well," she exclaimed, a bit impatiently, "what do you *want* to do? You don't expect to shed real tears, do you?"

"N-n-no!" I hesitated, "not exactly that, but there's a tone — a — Hattie, last Wednesday, when you quarrelled with young Fleming — I was not present, you know — but that night, a half-hour after our light was out, you spoke to me in the darkness, and I instantly asked you why you were crying and if you had been quarrelling, though you had not even reached the sobbing stage yet. Now how did I know you were crying?"

"I don't know — anyway I had no handkerchief," she laughed; "you heard it maybe in my voice."

"Yes," I answered, eagerly, "that was it. That curious veiling of the voice. Oh, Hattie, if I could only get that tone, but I can't, I've tried and tried!"

"Why," she exclaimed, "you've got it now — this very moment!"

"Yes," I broke in impatiently, and turning to her a

pair of reproachful, tear-filled eyes, "yes, but why? because I'm really crying, with the worry and the disappointment, and, oh, Hattie, the fright!"

And the landlady, a person who always lost one shoe when coming up-stairs, announced dinner, and I shuddered and turned my face away. Hattie went down, however, and bringing all her blandishments to bear upon the head of the establishment, secured for me a cup of coffee — that being my staff in all times of trouble or of need, and then we were off to the theatre, Hattie kindly keeping at my side for companionship or help, as need might be.

I did not appear in the first act, so I had plenty of time to receive my borrowed finery — to try it on, and then to dress in my own white muslin, ready for my first attempt at a crying part. It was a moonlit scene. Miss St. Clair, tall, slender, elegant, looked the young French gallant to the life in her black velvet court dress. I had to enter down some steps from a great stone doorway. I stood, ready to go on. I wore a mantilla with my muslin. I held a closed fan in my hand. My heart seemed to suffocate me — I thought, stupidly, "Why don't I pray?" but I could not think of a single word. I heard the faint music that preceded my entrance — a mad panic seized me. I turned and dashed toward the street-door. Mr. Ellsler, who had just made his exit, caught me by the skirts. "Are you mad, girl?" he cried; "go back — quick — quick! I tell you — there's your cue!"

Next moment, tremulous but smiling, I was descending the steps to meet the counterfeit lover awaiting me. My head was on his breast and my arm stealing slowly about his neck before I knew that the closed fan in my hand was crushed into fragments and marks of blood showing between my clinched fingers. My first lines were simply recited, without meaning, then the tender words and courtly manners aroused my imagination. The glamour of the stage was upon me. The frightened actress ceased to exist — I was the Spanish girl whose

long-mourned lover had returned to her; and there was something lacking in the greeting, some tone of the voice, some glance of the eye seemed strange, alien. There was more of ardor, less of tenderness than before. My lips trembled; suddenly I heard the veiled, pathetic tone I had all day striven for in vain, and curiously enough it never struck me that it was my voice — no! it was the Spanish girl who spoke. My heart leaped up in my throat with a great pity, tears rushed to my eyes, fell upon my cheeks. There was applause — of course, was not Miss St. Clair there? Suspicion arose in my mind — grew. I bethought me of the saving of my life on that stolen day passed in the forest long ago. I took my lover's hand and with pretty wiles drew him into the moonlight. Then swiftly stripping up the lace ruffles, showed his arm smooth and unblemished by any scar, and with the cry: "You are not Pascal de la Garde!" stood horror-stricken.

The moment the curtain fell Miss St. Clair sprang to me, and taking my face between her hands, she cried: "You would move a heart of stone!" She wiped her eyes, and turning to her husband, said: "Good God! she's a marvel!"

"No, no!" he snuffled, "not yet, Sallie; but she's a marvel in embryo!" He patted me on the shoulder. "You have a fortune somewhere between your throat and your eyes, my girl — you have, indeed!"

And then I rushed to don my borrowed robes for the next act, and stared stupidly when Hattie said: "What lovely applause you got, Clara, and you so frightened; you shook all over when you went on, we could see you."

But I was too excited over what was yet to be done really to comprehend her words. When I saw myself in the glass I was delighted. The open robe of pale blue satin, brocaded with silver, was lifted at the sides with big bunches of blush and deep-pink roses over a white satin petticoat. I wore a high Spanish comb, a white mantilla, a pink rose over the ear, after the national

fashion, and a great cluster of roses at my breast, and for the first time I felt the subtle joy that emanates from beautiful and becoming garments. The fine softness of the rich fabric was pleasant to my touch — its silken rustle was music to my ear. Miss St. Clair had lent me of her best, and as I saw it all reflected there, I thought how easy it must be for the rich to be good and happy, never dreaming that the wealthy, who to escape *ennui* and absolute idleness sometimes did wrong simply because there was nothing else to do, might think in turn, ah! how easy it must be for the poor to be good and happy.

But the overture ended abruptly. I gathered up my precious draperies and ran to the entrance to be ready for my cue. The first speeches were cold, haughty, and satirical. The gypsy who was personating my dead lover had deceived everyone else, even the half-blind old mother had accepted him as her son, though declaring him greatly changed in temper and in manner. But I, the sweetheart, was not convinced, and ignoring the advice of the highest at the court, was fighting the adventurer with the courage of despair.

As the scene went on, the stage hands (carpenters, gasmen, scene-shifters, etc.) began to gather in the entrances, always a sign of something unusual going on. I saw them — an ugly thought sprang up in my mind. Ah, yes, they are there waiting to see the ballet-girl fail in a leading part! An unworthy suspicion, I am sure, but it acted as a spur would have done upon an already excited horse, and with the same result, loss of self-control.

In the denunciation of the adventurer as a murderer and a personator of his own victim my passion rose to a perfect fury. I swept the stage, storming, raging, fearing nothing under heaven but the possible escape of the wretch I hated! Vaguely I noted the manager reaching far over a balcony to see me — I didn't care even for the manager. The audience burst into tremendous applause;

I didn't care for that either, I only wanted to see a rapier through the heart of the pale, sneering man before me. It was momentary madness. People were startled — the star twice forgot her lines. It was not correct, it was not artistic work. She, the part, was a great lady, and even her passion should have been partially restrained; but I, who played her, a ballet-girl, earning $5 a week, what could you expect, pray, for the price? Certainly not polish or refinement. But the genuine feeling, the absolute sincerity, and the crude power lavished upon the scene delighted the audience and created a very real sensation.

The curtain fell. Miss St. Clair took me into her kind arms and, without a word, kissed me heartily. The applause went on and on. She caught my hand and said, "Come!" As she led me to the curtain, I suddenly realized her intention, and a very agony of bashfulness seized upon me. I struggled frantically. "Oh, don't!" I begged. "Oh, please, I'm nobody, they won't like it, Miss St. Clair."

She motioned the men to pull back the curtain, and she dragged me out before it with her. The applause redoubled. Shamed and stupid, I stood there, my chin on my breast. Then I heard the laugh I so admired (Miss St. Clair had a laugh that the word merry describes perfectly), her arm went about my neck, while her fingers beneath my chin lifted my face till I met her smiling glance and smiled back at her. Then the audience burst into a great laugh, and bowing awkwardly to them and to her, I backed off, out of sight, as quickly as I could; she, bowing like a young prince, followed me. But again they called, and again the generous woman took me with her.

And that was the first time I ever experienced the honor of going before the curtain with a star. I supposed I had received the highest possible reward for my night's work; I forgot there were such things as newspapers in the town, but I was reminded of their existence the next day.

Never, never was I so astonished. Such notices as were given of the performance, and what was particularly dwelt upon, think you? Why, the tears. "Real tears — tears that left streaks on the girl's cheeks!" said one paper. "Who is she — have you seen her — the wonderful Columbus ballet-girl, who wins tears with tears, real ones, too?" asked another.

I was ashamed. I was afraid people would make fun of me at the theatre. At the box-office window that day many people were asking: "That girl that made the hit last night, is she really one of the ballet, or is it just a story, for effect?"

Some women asked, anxiously: "Will that girl cry to-night, do you think?"

It was very strange. One paper had a quieter article; it spoke of a rough diamond — of an earnest, honest method of addressing speeches directly to the character, instead of to the audience, as did many of the older actors. It claimed a future, a fair, bright future for the girl who could so thoroughly put herself in another's place, and declared it would watch with interest the movements of so remarkable a ballet-girl.

Now see how oddly we human dice are shaken about, and in what groups we fall, again and again. Among the honorable gentlemen sitting at that time in the Ohio Legislature was Colonel Donn Piatt, with the fever of the Southern marshes yet in his blood as a souvenir of his services through the war. He had gone languidly enough to the theatre that night, because there was nothing else for him to do — unless he swapped stories of the war in the hotel corridor with other ex-soldiers, and he was sick to death of that, and he was so surprised by what he saw that he was moved to write the article from which the last quotation is taken. Stopping in the same hotel, but quite unknown to him, was a young man, hardly out of boyhood, whose only lie, I honestly believe, was the one he told and swore to in order to raise his age to the proper military height that would admit him into the

army. Bright, energetic, almost attaining perpetual motion in his own person, ambitious John A. Cockerill just then served in the double capacity of a messenger in the House and reporter on a paper. Diphtheria, which was almost epidemic that winter, visited the staff of the paper he was on, and in consequence he was temporarily assigned to its dramatic work — thus he wrote another of the notices of my first venture in the tearful drama. Every day these two men were in the State-house — every day I walked through its grounds on my way to and from the theatre — each quite unconscious of the others.

But old Time shakes the box and casts the dice so many, many times, groupings must repeat themselves now and again, so it came about that after years filled with hard work and fair dreams, another shake of the box cast us down upon the table of Life, grouped together again — but each man knew and served me now faithfully, loyally; each giving me a hand to pull me up a step higher. They hated each other bitterly, vindictively, as journalists have been known to do occasionally; and as I knew the noble qualities of both, what better reward could I give for their goodness to me than to clasp their hands together and make them friends? It was not an easy task, it required *finesse* as well as courage, but 'twas the kind of task a woman loves — if she succeeds, and I succeeded.

They became friends, strong, earnest friends for the rest of their lives. Death severed the bond, if it is severed; I do not know, and they may not return to tell me — I only know that in the years that were to come, when each man headed a famous paper, Colonel John A. Cockerill, of the New York *World*, who wrote many a high word of praise for me when victory had at last perched on my banner, and Colonel Piatt, who with his brilliant wife made me known to many famous men and women in their hospitable Washington home, loved to recall that night in Columbus when, all unconsciously,

we three came so near to each other, only to drift apart for years and come together again.

And once I said, "like motes," and Donn Piatt swiftly added, "and a sunbeam," and both men lifted their glasses and, nodding laughingly at me, cried: "To the sunbeam!" while Mrs. Piatt declared, "That's a very pretty compliment," but to me the unanimity of thought between those erstwhile enemies was the prettiest thing about it.

But even so small a success as that had its attendant shadows, as I soon found. Though I was then boarding, with Hattie McKee for my room-mate, I felt I still owed a certain duty and respect to Mrs. Bradshaw. Therefore, when this wonderful thing happened to me, I thought I ought to go and tell her all about it. I went; she gave me a polite, unsmiling good-morning and pointed to a chair. I felt chilled. Presently she remarked, with a small, forced laugh: "You have become so great a person, I scarcely expected to see you here to-day."

I looked reproachfully at her, as I quietly answered: "But you see I am here;" then added, "I did not think you would make fun of me, Mrs. Bradshaw, I only tried to do my best."

"Oh," she replied, "one does not make fun of very successful people."

I turned away to hide my filling eyes, as I remarked: "Perhaps I'd better go away now."

I moved toward the door, wounded to the heart. I had thought she would be so pleased — you see, I was young yet, and sometimes very stupid — I forgot she had a daughter. But suddenly she called to me in the old, kindly voice I was so used to: "Come back, Clara," she cried, "come back! It's mean to punish you for another's fault. My dear, I congratulate you; you have only proved what I have long believed, that you have in you the making of a fine actress. But when I think who had that same chance, and that it was deliberately thrown away," her lips trembled, "I — well, it's hard to bear.

Even all this to-do about you in the part does not make her regret what she has done."

Poor mother! I felt so sorry for her. I wished to go away then, I thought my presence was unpleasant, but she made me tell her all about the evening, and describe Miss St. Clair's dress, and what everyone said and did. Loyal soul! I think that was a self-inflicted penance for a momentary unkindness.

Blanche gave me her usual kind greeting, and added the words: "Say, if I hadn't given you the chance, you couldn't have been a big gun to-day. You know Mr. Ellsler won't dare to give you anything, but he would have given me a nice present if I had done the part for him. So after all I've lost, I think you might give me a new piece of chewing-gum, mine won't snap or squeak or stretch out or do anything, it's just in its crumbly old age."

I gave the new gum; so, now, if that success seems not quite square, if you think I made an unfair use of my funds in obtaining promotion, do please remember that I was only an accessory *after* the act — not before it. I am the more anxious this should be impressed upon your mind because that penny was the only one I ever spent in paying for advancement professionally.

The second night of the "Lone House" was also the last night of Miss St. Clair's engagement, and when I carried her blue-brocade gown back to her, eagerly calling attention to its spotless condition, she stood with her hand high against the wall and her head resting heavily upon her outstretched arm. It was an attitude of such utter collapse, there was such a wanness on her white face that the commonplace words ceased to bubble over my lips, and, startled, I turned toward her husband. Charles Barras, gentleman as he was by birth and breeding, and one time officer in the American navy, was nevertheless in manner and appearance so odd that the sight or the sound of him provoked instant smiles, but that night his eyes were a tragedy, filled as they were with an anguish of helpless love.

For a sad moment he gazed at her silently — then he was counting drops from a bottle, holding smelling-salts to her pinched nostrils, removing her riding-boots, indeed, deftly filling the place not only of nurse, but dressing-maid, and as the wanness gradually faded from her weary face, bravely ignoring her own feelings, she made a little joke or two, then gave me hearty thanks for coming to her rescue, as she called it, praised my effort at acting, and asked me how I liked a crying part.

"Oh, I don't like it at all," I answered.

"Ah," she sighed, "we never like what we do best; that's why I can never be contented in elegant light comedy, but must strain and fret after dramatic, tragic, and pathetic parts — and to think that a young, untrained girl should step out of obscurity and without an effort do what I have failed in all these years!"

I stood aghast. "Why — why, Miss St. Clair!" I exclaimed, "you have applause and applause every night of your life!"

"Oh," she laughed, "you foolish child, it's not the applause I'm thinking of, but something finer, rarer. You have won tears, my dear, a thing I have never done in all my life, and never shall, no, never, I see that now!"

"I wish I had not!" I answered, remorsefully and quite honestly, because I was quite young and unselfish yet, and I loved her, and she understood and leaned over and kissed my cheek, and told me not to bury my talent, but to make good use of it by and by when I was older and free to choose a line of business. "Though," she added, "even here I'll wager it's few comedy parts that will come your way after to-night, young lady." And then I left her.

That same night I heard that a dread disease already abode with her, and slept and waked and went and came with her, and would not be shaken off, but clung ever closer and closer; and, oh! poor Charles Barras! money might have saved her then — money right then might have saved this woman of his love, and God only knows how

desperately he struggled, but the money came not. Then, worse still, Sallie was herself the bread-winner, and though Mr. Barras worked hard, doing writing and translating, acting as agent, as nurse, as maid, playing, too, in a two-act comedy, "The Hypochondriac," he still felt the sting of living on his wife's earnings, and she had, too, a mother and an elder sister to support; therefore she worked on and disease worked with her.

Charles Barras said, with bitter sarcasm in his voice: "I-I-I always see m-my wife Sallie with a helpless woman over each shoulder, a-a-and myself on her back, like the 'old man of the sea,' a-a-a pretty heavy burden that for a sick woman to carry, my girl! a-a-and a mighty pleasant picture for a man to have of his wife! A-a-and money — great God, money, right now, might save her — might save her!" He turned suddenly from me and walked on to the pitch-dark stage.

Poor Mr. Barras, I could laugh no more at his heelless boots, his funny half-stammer, and his ancient wig, not even when I recall the memory of that blazing Sunday in a Cincinnati Episcopal church, when, the stately liturgy over, the Reverend Doctor ascended the pulpit and, regardless of the suffering of his sweltering hearers, droned on endlessly, and Mr. Barras leaned forward, and drawing a large palm fan from the next pew's rack, calmly lifted his wig off with one hand while with the other he alternately fanned his ivory bald head and the steaming interior of his wig. The action had an electrical effect. In a moment even the sleepers were alert, awake, a fact which so startled the preacher that he lost his place — hemmed — h-h-med, and ran down, found the place again, started, saw Barras fanning his wig, though paying still most decorous attention to the pulpit, and before they knew it they were all scrambling to their feet at "Might, Majesty, and Power!" — were scrabbling for their pockets at "Let your light so shine," for Mr. Barras had shortened the service with a vengeance; hence the forgiving glances cast upon him as he carefully replaced his wig and sauntered forth.

Several years after that night in Columbus, when I had reached New York and was rehearsing for my first appearance there, I one morning heard hasty, shuffling steps following me, and before I could enter the stage-door, a familiar "Er-er-er Clara, Clara!" stopped me, and I turned to face the wealthy author of the "Black Crook" — Mr. Charles Barras. There he stood in apparently the same heelless cloth gaiters, the same empty-looking black alpaca suit, the clumsy turned-over collar that was an integral part of the shirt and not separate from it, the big black satin handkerchief-tie that he had worn years ago, but the face, how bloodless, shrunken, lined, and sorrowful it looked beneath the adamantine youthfulness of that chestnut wig!

"D-d-don't you know me?" he asked.

"Yes, of course I do," I answered as I took his hand.

"W-w-well then don't run away — er-er it's against law, r-religion, or decency to turn your back on a rich man. D-d-dodge the poor, Clara, my girl! but never turn your back on a man with money!"

I was pained; probably I looked so. He went on: "I-I-I'm rich now, Clara. I've got a fine marine villa, and in it are an old, old dog and a dying old woman. They both belonged to my Sallie, and so I'll keep hold of 'em as long as I can, for her sake. A-a-after they go!" he turned his head away, he looked up at the beautiful blue indifference of the sky, his face seemed to tremble all over, his eyes came back, and he muttered: "W-w-we'll see — w-w-we'll see what will happen then. But, Clara, you remember that time when money could have saved her? The money I receive in one week now, if I could have had it then, she, Sallie, might be over there on Broadway now buying the frills and furbelows she loved and needed, too, and couldn't have. The little boots and slippers — you remember Sallie's instep? Had to have her shoes to order always," he stopped, he pressed his lips tight together for a moment, then suddenly he burst out: "By God, when a man struggles hard all his life,

it's a damn rough reward to give him a handsome coffin for his wife!"

Oh, poor rich man! how my heart ached for him. A tear slipped down my cheek; he saw it. "D-d-don't!" he said, "d-don't, my girl, she can't come back, and it hurts her to have anyone grieve. I want you to come and see me, when you get settled here, a-a-and I wish you a great big success. My Sallie liked you, she spoke often of you. I-I-I'll let you know how to get out there, and I-I-I'll show you her dog — old Belle, and you can stroke her, and er-er sit in Sallie's chair a little while perhaps — and er — don't, my girl, don't cry, she can't come back, you know," and shaking my hands he left me, thinking I was crying for Sallie, who was safe at rest and had no need of tears, while instead they were for himself — so old, so sad, so lonely, such a poor rich man! Did he know then how near Death was to him? Some who knew him well believe unto this day that the fatal fall from the cars was no fall, but a leap — only God knows.

I never paid the promised visit — could find no opportunity — and I never saw him again, that eccentric man, devoted husband, and honest gentleman, Charles Barras.

CHAPTER TWENTIETH

I Have to Pass through Bitter Humiliation to Win High Encomiums from Herr Bandmann; while Edwin Booth's Kindness Fills the Theatre with Pink Clouds, and I Float Thereon.

OCCASIONALLY one person united two 'lines of business," as in the case of Mrs. Bradshaw, who played "old women" and "heavy business" both, and when anything happened to disqualify such a person for work the inconvenience was of course very great. Mrs. Bradshaw, as I have said before, was very stout, but her frame was delicate in the extreme, and her slender ankles were unable to bear her great weight, and one of them broke. Of course that meant a long lying up in dry-dock for her, and any amount of worry for ever so many other people. Right in the middle of her imprisonment came the engagement of the German actor, Herr Daniel Bandmann. He was to open with "Hamlet," and, gracious Heaven! I was cast for the *Queen-mother*. It took a good deal in the way of being asked to do strange parts to startle me, but the *Queen-mother* did it. I was just nicely past sixteen, but even I dared not yet lay claim to seventeen, and I was to go on the stage for the serious Shakespearian mother of a star.

"Oh, I couldn't!"

"Can't be helped — no one else," growled Mr. Ellsler. "Just study your lines, right away, and do the best you can."

I had been brought up to obey, and I obeyed. We had heard much of Mr. Bandmann, of his originality, his impetuosity, and I had been very anxious to see him.

After that cast, however, I would gladly have deferred the pleasure. The dreaded morning came. Mr. Bandmann, a very big man, to my frightened eyes looked gigantic. He was dark-skinned, he had crinkly, flowing hair, his eyes were of the curious red-brown color of a ripe chestnut. He was large of voice, and large of gesture. There was a greeting, a few introductions, and then rehearsal was on, and soon, oh! so soon, there came the call for the *Queen*. I came forward. He glanced down at me, half smiled, waved his arm, and said: "Not you, not the *Player-Queen*, but *Gertrude*."

I faintly answered: "I'm sorry, sir, but I have to play *Gertrude*."

"Oh, no you won't!" he cried, "not with me!" He was furious, he stamped his feet, he turned to the manager: "What's all this infernal nonsense? I want a woman for this part! What kind of witches' broth are you serving me, with an old woman for my *Ophelia*, and an apple-cheeked girl for my mother! She can't speak these lines! she, dumpling face!"

Mr. Ellsler said, quietly: "There is sickness in my company. The heavy woman cannot act; this young girl will not look the part, of course, but you need have no fear about the lines, she never loses a word."

"Curse the *words!* It is, that that little girl shall not read with the sense one line, no, not one line of the Shakespeare!" his English was fast going in his rage.

Mr. Ellsler answered: "She will read the part as well as you ever heard it in your life, Mr. Bandmann." And Mr. Bandmann gave a jeering laugh, and snapped his fingers loudly.

It was most insulting, and I felt overwhelmed with humiliation. Mr. Ellsler said, angrily: "Very well, as I have no one else to offer you, we will close the theatre for the night!"

But Mr. Bandmann did not want to close — not he. So, after swearing in German for a time, he resumed rehearsal, and when my time came to speak I could

scarcely lift my drooping head or conquer the lump in my throat, but, somehow, I got out the entreating words:

> "Good Hamlet, cast thy Knighted color off,
> And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark."

He lifted his head suddenly — I went on:

> "Do not, for ever, with thy veiled lids
> Seek for thy noble father in the dust."

He exclaimed, surprisedly: "So! so!" as I continued my speech. Now in this country, "So — so!" is a term applied to restless cows at milking-time, and the devil of ridicule, never long at rest in my mind, suddenly wakened, so that when I had to say:

> "Let not thy mother lose her prayers, Hamlet:
> I pray thee, stay with us; go not to Wittenberg."

and Mr. Bandmann smilingly cried: "So! so!" and I swiftly added the word "Bossy," and every soul on the stage broke into laughter. He saw he was laughed at, and it took a whole week's time and an elaborate explanation, to enable him to grasp the jest — but when he got a good hold of it, he so! so! bossied and stamped and laughed at a great rate.

During the rehearsal — which was difficult in the extreme, as his business (*i.e.*, actions or poses accompanying certain words) was very different from that we were used to — he never found one single fault with my reading, and made just one suggestion, which I was most careful to follow — for one taste of his temper had been enough.

Then came the night — a big house, too, I remember. I wore long and loose garments to make me look more matronly; but, alas! the drapery *Queen Gertrude* wears, passed under her jaws from ear to ear, was particularly becoming to me, and brought me uncommonly near to

prettiness. Mr. Ellsler groaned, but said nothing, while Mr. Bandmann sneered out an "Ach Himmel!" shrugged his shoulders, and made me feel real nice and happy. And when one considers that without me the theatre must have closed or changed its bill, even while one pities him for the infliction, one feels he was unnecessarily unkind.

Well, all went quietly until the closet scene — between *Hamlet*, the *Queen*, and the *Ghost*. It is a great scene, and he had some very effective business. I forgot Bandmann in *Hamlet*. I tried hard to show shame, pride, and terror. The applause was rapturous. The curtain fell, and — why, what, in the name of heaven, was happening to me?

I was caught by the arms and lifted high in air; when I came down I was crushed to *Hamlet's* bosom, with a crackling sound of breaking Roman-pearl beads, and in a whirlwind of "Himmels!" "Gotts!" and things, I was kissed with frenzied wet kisses on either cheek — on my brow — my eyes. Then disjointed English came forth: "Oh, you so great, you kleine apple-cheeked girl! you maker of the fraud — you so great nobody! ach! you are fire — you have pride — you are a *Gertrude* who have shame!" More kisses, then suddenly he realized the audience was still applauding — loudly and heartily. He grasped my hand, he dragged me before the curtain, he bowed, he waved his hands, he threw one arm about my shoulders.

"Good Lord!" I thought, "he isn't going to do it all over again — out here, is he?" and I began backing out of sight as quickly as possible.

It was a very comforting plaster to apply to my wounds — such a success as that, but it would have been so much pleasanter not to have received the wound in the first place.

Mr. Bandmann's best work, I think, was done in "Narcisse." His *Hamlet* seemed to me too melodramatic — if I may say so. If *Hamlet* had had all that tremendous fund of energy, all that love of action, the *Ghost* need

never have returned to "whet his almost blunted purpose." Nor could I like his scene with his guilty mother. There was not even a *forced* show of respect for her. There was no grief for her wrong-doing — rather, his whole tone was that of a triumphant detective. And his speeches, "Such an act!" and "Look upon this picture!" were given with such unction — such a sneeringly, perfect comprehension of her lust, as to become themselves lustful.

His *Shylock* was much admired, I believe, but *Narcisse* was a most artistic piece of work. His appearance was superb; his philosophical flippancy anent his poverty, his biting contempt of the powerful *Pompadour;* his passion and madness on discovering his lost wife in the person of the dying favorite, and his own death, were really great.

And just one little month after the departure of the impetuous German, who should be announced but Mr. Edwin Booth. I felt my eyes growing wider as I read in the cast, "*Queen Gertrude — Miss Morris.*" Uncle Dick, behind me, said: "Would you like me to d—n poor Brad's bones for you, Clara? It's hard lines on you, and that's a fact!"

"Oh!" I thought, "why won't her blessed old bones mend themselves! she is not lazy, but they are! oh, dear! oh, dear!" and miserable tears slid down my cheeks all the way home, and moistened saltily my supper of crackers after I got there.

I had succeeded before, oh, yes; but I could not help recalling just how hot the ploughshares were over which I had walked to reach that success. Then, too, all girls have their gods — some have many of them. Some girls change them often. My gods were few. Sometimes I cast one down, but I never changed them, and on the highest, whitest pedestal of all, grave and gentle, stood the god of my professional idolatry — Edwin Booth. I wiped off cracker-crumbs with one hand and tears with the other.

It was so humiliating to be forced upon anyone, as I should be forced upon Mr. Booth, since there was still no one but my "apple-cheeked" self to go on for the *Queen;* and though I dreaded indignant complaint or disparaging remarks from him, I was honestly more unhappy over the annoyance this blemish on the cast would cause him. Well, it could not be helped, I should have to bear a second cruel mortification, that was all. I put my four remaining crackers back in their box, brushed up the crumbs, wiped my eyes, repeated my childish little old-time "Now I lay me," and went to sleep; only to dream of Mr. Booth holding out a hideous mask, and pressing me to have the decency to put it on before going on the stage for *Gertrude.*

When the dreaded Monday came, lo! a blizzard came with it. The trains were all late, or stalled entirely. We rehearsed, but there was no Mr. Booth present. He was held in a drift somewhere on the line, and at night, therefore, we all went early to the theatre, so that if he came we would have time to go over the important scenes — or if he did not come that we might prepare for another play.

He came. Oh, how my heart sank! This would be worse for him even than it had been for Mr. Bandmann, for the latter knew of his disappointing *Queen* in the morning, and had time to get over the shock, but poor Mr. Booth was to receive his blow only a few minutes before going on the stage. At last it came — the call.

"Mr. Booth would like to see you for a few moments in his room."

I went, I was cold all over. He was so tired, he would be so angry. I tapped. I went in. He was dressed for *Hamlet,* but he was adding a touch to his brows, and snipping a little at his nails — hurriedly. He looked up, said "Good-evening!" rather absently, then stopped, looked again, smiled, and waving his hand slightly, said, just in Bandmann's very words: "No, not you — not the *Player-Queen* — but *Gertrude.*"

Tears rushed to my eyes, my whole heart was in my voice as I gasped: "I'm so sorry, sir, but *I* have to do *Queen Gertrude*. You see," I rushed on, "our heavy woman has a broken leg and can't act."

A whimsical look, half smile, half frown, came over his face. "That's bad for the *heavy* woman," he remarked.

"Yes," I acquiesced, "but, if you please, I had to do this part with Mr. Bandmann too, and — and — I'll only worry you with my looks, sir, not about the words or business."

He rested his dark, unspeakably melancholy eyes on my face, his brows raised and then knit themselves in such troubled wise as made me long to put an arm about his shoulders and assure him I wouldn't be so awfully bad.

Then he sighed and said: "Well, it was the closet-scene I wanted to speak to you about. When the *Ghost* appears, you are to be—" He stopped, a faint smile touched his lips, even reached his eyes; he laid down his scissors, and remarked, "There's no denying it, my girl, I look a great deal more like your father than you look like my mother — but," he went on with his directions, and, considerate gentleman that he was, spoke no single unkind word to me, though my playing of that part must have been a great annoyance to him, when added to hunger and fatigue.

When the closet-scene was over, the curtain down, I caught up my petticoats and made a rapid flight roomward. The applause was filling the theatre. Mr. Booth, turning, called after me: "You — er — *Gertrude* — er — *Queen!* Oh, somebody call that child back here," and someone roared: "Clara — Mr. Booth is calling you!"

I turned, but stood still. He beckoned, then came to me, took my hand, and saying: "My dear, we must not keep them waiting *too* long!" led me before the curtain with him. I very slightly bent my head to the audience, whom I felt were applauding *Hamlet* only, but turned and bowed myself to the ground to him whose courtesy had brought me there.

When we came off he smiled amusedly, tapped me on the shoulder, and said: "My Gertrude, you are very young, but you know how to pay a pretty compliment — thank you, child!"

So, whenever you see pictures of nymphs or goddesses floating on pink clouds, and looking idiotically happy, you can say to yourself: "That's just how Clara Morris felt when Edwin Booth said she had paid him a compliment."

Yes, I floated, and I'll take a solemn oath, if necessary, that the whole theatre was filled with pink clouds the rest of that night — for girls are made that way, and they can't help it.

In after years I knew him better, and I treasure still the little note he sent me in answer to my congratulation on his escape from the bullet fired at him from the gallery of the theatre in Chicago. A note that expressed as much gentle surprise at my "kind thought for him," as though I only, and not the whole country, was rejoicing at his safety.

He had a wonderful power to win love from other men — yes, I use the word advisedly. It was not mere good-fellowship or even affection, but there was something so fine and true, so strong and sweet in his nature, that it won the love of those who knew him best.

It would seem like presumption for me to try to add one little leaf to the tight-woven laurel crown he wore. Everyone knows the agony of his "Fool's Revenge," the damnable malice of his *Iago*, the beauty and fire of *Antony*, and the pure perfection of his *Hamlet* — but how many knew the slow, cruel martyrdom of his private life! which he bore with such mute patience that in my heart there is an altar raised to the memory of that Saint Edwin of many sorrows, who was known and envied by the world at large — as the great actor, Edwin Booth.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIRST

I Digress, but I Return to the Columbus Engagement of Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kean—Their Peculiarities and Their Work.

BEFORE one has "arrived," it is astonishing how precious the simplest word of encouragement or of praise becomes, if given by one who has "arrived." Not long ago a lady came up to me and said: "I am Mrs. D——, which is, of course, Greek to you; but I want to thank you now for your great goodness to me years ago. I was in the ballet in a Chicago theatre. You were playing 'Camille.' One day the actress who played *Olympe* was sick, and as I was, you said, the tallest and the handsomest of the girls, you gave the part to me. I was wild with delight until the nervousness got hold of me. I was not strong — my stomach failed me; the girls thought that very funny, and guyed me unmercifully. I was surely breaking down. You came along, ready to go on, and heard them. I could scarcely stand. You said: 'What's the matter — are you nervous?' I tried to speak, but only nodded. You took my hand and, stroking it, gently said, 'Isn't it awful?' then, glancing at my tormentors, added, 'but it's nothing to be ashamed of, and just as soon as you face the footlights all your courage will come back to you, and, my dear, comfort yourself with the knowledge that the perfectly collected, self-satisfied beginner rarely attains a very high position on the stage.' Oh, if you only knew how my heart jumped at your words. My fingers grew warmer, my nerves steadier, and I really did succeed in getting the lines over my lips some way. But you saved me, you made an actress of me. Ah, don't

laugh! don't shake your head, please! Had I failed that night, don't you see, I should never have had a chance given me again; while, having got through safely, it was not long before I was pointed out as the girl who had played *Olympe* with Miss Morris, and on the strength of that I was trusted with another part, and so crept on gradually; and now I want to thank you for the sympathy and kindness you showed me so long ago"—and though her warm gratitude touched me deeply, I had then — have now — no recollection whatever of the incident she referred to, nor of ever having seen before her very handsome face. And so, no doubt, many of whom I write, who from their abundance cast *me* a word of praise or of advice now and again, will have no memory of the *largesse* which I have cherished all these years.

Among my most treasured memories I find the gentle words and astonishing prophecy of Mr. Charles Kean. That was the last visit to this country of Mr. and Mrs. Kean, and his memory was failing him grievously. He had with him two English actors, each of whom knew every line of all his parts, and their duty was, when on the stage or off, so long as Mr. Kean was before the house, to keep their eyes on him, and at the first sign of hesitancy on his part one of them gave him the needed word. Once or twice, when he seemed quite bewildered, Mr. Cathcart, turning his back to the audience, spoke Mr. Kean's entire speech, imitating his nasal tones to the life.

But it was off the stage that the ancient couple were most delightful. Ellen and Charles were like a pair of old, old love-birds — a little dull of eye, nor quite perfect in the preening of their somewhat rumpled plumage, but billing and cooing with all the persistency and satisfaction of their first caging. Their appearance upon the street provoked amusement — sometimes even excitement. I often saw drivers of drays and wagons pull up their horses and stop in the crowded street to stare at them as they made their way toward the theatre. Mrs. Kean

lived inside of the most astounding hoop woman ever carried. Its size, its weight, its tilting power were awful. Entrances had to be cleared of all chairs or tables to accommodate Mrs. Kean's hoop. People scrambled or slid sideways about her on the stage, swearing mentally all the time, while a sudden gasp from the front row or a groan from Mr. Cathcart announced a tilt and a revelation of heelless slippers and dead-white stockings, and in spite of his dignity Charles was not above a joke on Ellen's hoop, for one rainy day, as she strove to enter a carriage door she stuck fast, and the hoop — mercy! It was well Mr. Kean was there to hold it down; but as a troubled voice from within said: "I'm caught somehow — don't you see, Charles?" With a twinkling eye Charles replied: "Yes, Ellen, my dear, I do see — and — and I'm trying to keep everyone else from seeing, too!" a speech verging so closely upon impropriety that, with antique coquetry, Mrs. Kean punished him by tweaking his ear when he squeezed in beside her.

The Kean bonnet was the wonder of the town. It was a large coal-scuttle of white leghorn and at the back there was a sort of flounce of ribbon which she called her "bonnet-cape"; draped over it she wore a great, bright-green barège veil. But she was not half so funny as was her husband on the street. His short little person buttoned up tightly in a regular bottle-green "Mantellini" sort of overcoat, loaded with frogs of heavy cord, and lined, cuffed, and collared with fur of such remarkable color, quality, and marking as would have puzzled the most experienced student of natural history to name; while vicious little street boys at sight of it always put searching questions as to the cost of cat-skins in London.

As they came down the street together, Mrs. Kean, majestically towering above her lord and master, looked like an old-time frigate with every inch of canvas spread, while at her side Charles puffed and fretted like a small tug. The street boys were a continual torment to him, but Mrs. Kean appeared serenely unconscious of their

existence, even when her husband made short rushes at them with his gold-headed cane, and crying: "Go a-way — you irreverent little brutes — go a-way!" and then puffed laboriously back to her again as she sailed calmly on.

One day a citizen caught one of the small savages, and after boxing his ears soundly, pitched him into the alley-way, when the seemingly enraged little Englishman said, deprecatingly: "I — I wouldn't hurt the little beast — he — he hasn't anyone to teach him any better, you know — poor little beggar!" and then he dropped behind for a moment to pitch a handful of coppers into the alley before hurrying up to his wife's side to boast of the jolly good drubbing the little monster had received — from which I gathered the idea that in a rage Charles would be as fierce as seething new milk.

Everyone who knew anything at all of this actor knew of his passionate love and reverence for his great father. He used always to carry his miniature in *Hamlet,* using it in the "Look here, upon this picture, then on this" scene; but I knew nothing of all that when he first arrived to play engagements both in Cleveland and Columbus, but being very eager to see all I could of him, I came very early to the theatre, and as I walked up and down behind the scenes I caught two or three times a glint of something on the floor, which might have been a bit of tinsel; but finally I went over to it, touched it with my foot, and then picked up an oval gold case, with handsome frame enclosing a picture; a bit of broken ribbon still hung from the ring on top of the frame. I ran with it to the prompter, who knew nothing of it, but said there would soon be a hue and cry for it from someone, as it was of value. "Perhaps you'd better take it to Mr. Kean — it might be his." I hesitated, but the prompter said he was busy and I was not, so I started toward the dressing-room the Keans shared together, when suddenly the door was flung open and Mr. Kean came out in evident excitement. He bumped against me

as he was crying: "I say there — you — have you seen — oh, I — er beg your pardon!"

I also apologized, and added: "If you please, sir, does this belong to you? I found it behind the scenes."

He caught it from my hand, bent to look at it in the dim light, then, pressing it to his lips, exclaimed fervently: "Thank the good God!" He held up a length of broken black ribbon, saying: "Hey, but you have played me a nice trick!" I understood at once that he used the locket in "Hamlet," and I ventured: "If you can't wear gold and your ribbon cuts, could you not have a silver chain oxidized for your 'property' picture, sir?" He chucked me under the chin, exclaiming: "A good idea that — I — I'll tell Ellen of that; but, my dear, this is no 'property' locket — this is one of my greatest earthly treasures — it's the picture of——"

He stopped — he looked at me for quite a moment, then he said: "You come here to the light." I followed him obediently. "Now can you tell me who that is a miniature of?" and he placed the oval case in my hands. I gave a glance at the curled hair, the beautiful profile, the broad turned-down collar, and smilingly exclaimed: "It's Lord Byron!"

Good gracious, what was the matter with the little old gentleman! "Ha! ha!" he cried. "Ha! ha! listen to the girl!" He fairly pranced about; he got clear out on the dark stage and, holding out his hands to the emptiness, cried again: "Listen to the girl — Lord Byron, says she — at one glance!"

"Well," I replied resentfully, "it *does* look like Byron!" And he "Ha! ha'd!" some more, and wiped his eyes and said, "I must tell Ellen this. Come here, my dear, come here!" He took my hand and led me to the dressing-room, crying: "It's Charles, my dear — it's Charles — and oh, my dear, my dear, I — I have it — see now!" he held up the locket.

"Oh, how glad I am! And now, Charles, perhaps you'll give up that miserable ribbon," and she kissed his cheek in congratulation.

But on the old gentleman went: "And, Ellen, my dear, look at this girl here — just look at her. She found him for me, and I said, who is he — and she up and said — Ellen, are you listening? — said she, 'It's Lord Byron!'"

"Did she now?" exclaimed Mrs. Kean, with pleased eyes.

But I was getting mad, and I snapped a bit, I'm afraid, when I said: "Well, I don't know who it is, but it does look like Byron — I'll leave it to anyone in the company if it doesn't!"

"Listen to her, Ellen! Hang me if she's not getting hot about it, too!" Then he came over to me, and in the gravest, gentlest tone said, "It *is* like Byron, my girl, but it is not him — you found the picture of my beloved and great father, Edmund Kean," and he kissed me gently on the forehead, and said, "Thank you — thank you!" and as Mrs. Kean came over and put her arm about me and repeated the kiss and thanks, Charles snuffled most distinctly from the corner where he was folding his precious miniature within a silk handkerchief.

They were both at their very best in the tragedy of "Henry VIII." Mr. Kean's *Wolsey* was an impressive piece of work, and to the eye he was as true a Cardinal as ever shared in an Ecumenical Council in Catholic Rome, or hastened to private audience at the Vatican with the Pope himself; and his superb robes, his priestly splendor had nothing about them that was imitation. Everything was real — the silks, the jewelled cross and ring, and as to the lace, I gasped for breath with sheer astonishment. Never had I seen, even in a picture, anything to suggest the exquisite beauty of that ancient web. Full thirty inches deep, the yellowing wonder fell over the glowing cardinal-red beneath it. I cannot remember how many thousands of dollars they had gladly given for it to the sisters of the tottering old convent in the hills, where it had been created long ago; and though it seemed so fragily frail and useless a thing, yet had it proved strong enough to prop up the leaning walls of

its old home, and spread a sound roof above the blessed altar there — so strong sometimes is beauty's weakness.

And Mrs. Kean, what a *Catherine* she was! Surely nothing could have been taken from the part, nothing added to it, without marring its perfection. In the earlier acts one seemed to catch a glimpse of that Ellen Tree who had been a beauty as well as a popular actress when Charles Kean had come a-wooing. Her clear, strong features, her stately bearing were beautifully suited to the part of *Queen Catherine*. Her performance of the court scene was a liberal education for any young actress. Her regal dignity, her pride, her passion of hatred for *Wolsey* held in strong leash, yet now and again springing up fiercely. Her address to the *King* was a delight to the ear, even while it moved one to the heart, and through the deep humility of her speech one saw, as through a veil, the stupendous pride of the Spanish princess, who knew herself the daughter of a king, if she were not the wife to one. With most pathetic dignity she gave her speech beginning:

> "Sir, I desire you do me right and justice;"

maintaining perfect self-control, until she came to the words:

> "——— Sir, call to mind
> That I have been your wife in this obedience
> Upward of twenty years and, ——"

Her voice faltered, the words trembled on her lips:

> "——— have been blest
> With many children by you."

In that painful pause one remembered with a pang that all those babes were dead in infancy, save only the Princess Mary. Then, controlling her emotion and lifting her head high, she went on to the challenge — if aught could

be reported against her honor. It was a great act, her passionate cry to *Wolsey:*

"——— Lord cardinal,
To *you* I speak."

thrilled the audience, while to his:

"——— Be patient yet,"

her sarcastic:

"I will, when you are humble!"

cut like a knife, and brought quick applause. But best, greatest, queenliest of all was her exit, when refusing to obey the King's command:

"——— Call her again."

for years one might remember those ringing words:

"I will not tarry: no, nor ever more,
Upon this business, my appearance make
In any of their courts."

It was a noble performance. Mr. Kean's mannerisms were less noticeable in *Wolsey* than in other parts, and the scenes between the Queen and Cardinal were a joy to lovers of Shakespeare.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SECOND

I Hear Mrs. Kean's Story of Wolsey's Robe — I Laugh at an Extravagantly Kind Prophecy.

FROM the time I found the miniature and by accident fed Mr. Kean's innocent vanity in his father's likeness to Byron, he made much of me. Evening after evening, in Columbus, he would have me come to their dressing-room, for after the habit of the old-time actor, they came very early, dressed without flurry, and were ready before the overture was on. There they would tell me stories, and when Charles had a teasing fit on him, he would relate with great gusto the awful disaster that once overtook Ellen in a theatre in Scotland, "when she played a Swiss boy, my girl — and — and her breeches ——"

"Now, Charles!" remonstrated Mrs. Kean.

"Knee breeches, you know, my dear ——"

"Charles!" pleadingly.

"Were of black velvet — yes, black velvet, I remember because, when they broke from ——"

"C-h-a-r-l-e-s!" and then the stately Mrs. Kean would turn her head away and give a small sob — when Charles would wink a knowing wink and trot over and pat the broad shoulder and kiss the rouged cheek, saying: "Why, why, Ellen, my dear, what a great baby! now, now, but you know those black breeches did break up before you got across the bridge."

Then Mrs. Kean turned and drove him into his own corner or out of the door, after which she would exclaim: "It's just one of his larks, my dear. I *did* have an accident, the seam of one leg of my breeches broke and showed the white lining a bit; but if you'll believe me,

I've known that man to declare that — that — they fell off, my dear; but generally that's on Christmas or his birthday, when only friends are by."

Mr. Kean had been the first man to wear an absolutely correct cardinal's robe on the stage, and very proud he was of that fact, and never failed in giving his Ellen all the credit of it. Until this time actors had worn a scarlet "something," that seemed a cross between a king's mantle or a woman's wrapper. Mr. Kean had been quite carried away with enthusiasm over his coming production of "Henry VIII.," and his wife, seeing his disappointment and dissatisfaction over the costumer's best efforts in the direction of a cardinal's robe, determined, some way or somehow, to obtain for him an exact copy of the genuine article.

One night, while "Louis XI." was going on, Mrs. Kean herself told me how she had at last succeeded. They were in Rome for their holiday; they had many letters, some to very important personages. In her story Mrs. Kean gave names and dates and amounts of money expended, but they have passed from my memory, while the dramatic incident remains.

From the first she had made known to her most powerful Roman friend her desire to see the robe of a cardinal — to obtain measurements from it, and had been treated at first to a great showing of uplifted hands and eyes and many "impossibles," but later on had received positive promises of help. Yet days, even weeks passed, and always there was some excuse — nothing came of the fine promises.

One day, in her anxiety and disappointment, she mentioned to an English friend, who had long resided in Rome, her trouble over the procrastination of her Italian acquaintance, when the Englishwoman asked: "What have you paid him?" "Paid him?" cried Mrs. Kean. "Do you know you are speaking of F——, whose high official as well as social position is such——"

"Oh," laughed the visitor, "his position has nothing

to do with it — his being your friend has nothing to do with it. The Italian palm is an itching palm — no wonder time is being wasted. Soothe that palm the next time he calls, and mention the day on which you are compelled to leave for home, and he will act quickly enough, though you really are asking for next to an impossibility, when you, a woman, ask to see and handle a cardinal's robe."

"Oh, my dear!" cried Mrs. Kean, "when that stately, gray-haired gentleman next came, I almost fainted at the thought of putting such an insult upon him as to offer him money. Indeed I could barely whisper, when clasping his hand I left some broad gold pieces there, murmuring, 'For the poor, sir!' — and if you'll believe me, he brightened up and instantly said: 'Keep to the house to-morrow, Madame, and I will notify you what you are to do, and the effort to get a robe to you here having failed, you will have to come to the general "audience" his Holiness will grant day after to-morrow, and, and, hem! you will do well to have some loose *lire* in your pouch, and be sure, sure, you carry a smelling-bottle. I suppose, of course, so famous an actress as yourself can faint at command, if need be? Then the tailor, an usher or two, possibly even a guard may require a fee, for they will run great risk in serving you, Madame. A woman within those sacred passages and chambers!'

"He held up his hands in horror, but nevertheless he was doing directly what he had been promising to do for weeks, and all for a few broad pieces of gold. After he left me I was fairly sick with feverish excitement. I dared not tell Charles of the arrangement; he would have left Rome instantly, and here was I preparing to bribe tailor, ushers, guard — and beyond them, to be still armed with loose *lire*. Oh, to what depth was I falling!

"Next day I received a card of admission for the 'audience,' and orders: 'To keep my eyes open — to show no surprise, but to follow *silently* wherever a hand beckoned with a single finger. To bring all things need-

ful for my use — not forgetting the loose *lire* and the smelling-bottle.'

"When I entered the carriage to go to the Vatican, I was so weak with hope and fear and fright that Charles was quite upset about me, and was all for going with me; so I had to brace up and pretend the air was already doing me good. As I looked back at him, I wondered if he would divorce me, if in my effort to secure the pattern of a cardinal's gown I should create a tremendous scandal? I wore the regulation black silk, with black veil, demanded for the occasion, but besides the little pouch of silk depending from my belt with *lire*, salts, and 'kerchief, I had beneath my gown a pocket in which were some white Swiss muslin, pins, pencil, and tablets, and small scissors.

"There were many carriages — many people. I saw them all as in a dream. In a magnificent room the ladies were formed in line, waiting to be admitted to the Holy Father's presence. I was forgetting to keep my eyes open — there was a stir. A great door was opening down its centre. I heard a faint, low 'Hem!' The line began to move forward — a little louder that 'Hem!' Suddenly my eyes cleared — I looked. A pair of curtains, a little ahead, trembled. I drew my smelling-bottle and held it to my nostrils, as if ill, but no one noticed me — all were intent upon the opening of the great door. As I came on a line with the curtains, a hand, dream-like, beckoned. I stepped sidewise between the curtains, that parted, then fell thick and soft behind me. Another white beckoning hand appeared at the far side of this chamber. Swiftly I crossed toward it. A whisper of 'Quick! quick!' just reached me — a door opened, and I was in a passage-way, and for the first time saw a guide.

"At the foot of the stairs he paused — yet the voice had said 'Quick! quick!' I thought of the loose *lire* — yes, that was it. I gave him three, and saw him glide up the stairs with cat-like stealth. Here were bare walls and floors, and all that cold cleanliness that makes a woman shrink and shiver.

"At last I was in a small, bare room, with brick-paved floor. A table stood in its centre, and a small and wizened man, red-eyed and old, glided in and laid upon the table — oh, joy — oh, triumph almost reached! — a glowing-red cardinal's robe. As I laid my hand upon it the ferret-like custodian gave a sort of whispered groan, 'Oh, the sacrilege! and the danger! his whole life's occupation risked!'

"I remembered the 'itching palm,' and as my hand went toward my pocket, his brown claw was extended, and the glint of gold so warmed his heart that smiles came about his toothless mouth, and seeing me, woman fashion, measuring by finger-lengths, he offered me a dirty old tape-measure — then stole to the second door 'to watch for me.' Oh, yes — to watch like the cat — while with all the haste possible the good and most high lady would gain such knowledge as she could, and after all the robe was but an old one, etc., etc.

"All whispered, while I with the deft fingers of a skilled seamstress and the comprehending eye of the actress, well used to strange costumes, was measuring here and putting down notes, swiftly pinning on a bit of muslin there, and cutting an exact pattern. And, lo! the piece that crosses the chest, cape-like, yet without visible opening, came near undoing me. Tears began to blind me, but — but, ah well, my dear, I thought of Charles, and it is astonishing what love can do to sharpen the eyes and clear the brain. Suddenly the thing seemed quite plain to me. I then turned the hem, and ripping it open an inch or so, I took a few ravellings of the silk, where it was clean and bright, for a sample for the dyers to go by — since the silk would have to be prepared especially if it was to be absolutely correct.

"I rearranged my veil, crept to the door, and agreeably surprised the watchers by telling them I was through. The ferrety old man had the robe in his arms, and was gliding swiftly out of the room in the merest instant. I followed as softly as possible the other watcher. Once

an unseen man cleared his throat as we passed, and I thought my guide would have fallen from sheer terror, but we reached in safety the frescoed corridor again and stood at the door waiting. The guide scratched gently with his nails on the lower panel — a pause, then the door began to move, and he disappeared as a ghost might have done. Across the room a hand appeared between the hangings, beckoning me; I moved swiftly toward it. I could hear a hum of voices, low and restrained. There was but one room now between me and the great chamber in which we had waited in line for 'audience.' No further signal came, what should I do? I was nearly fainting. Then another hand, a hand I knew by the splendid ring on its middle finger, appeared. I almost staggered to it. A whisper like a breath came to me, 'smelling-salts,' in an instant the bottle was in my hand, I was through the curtains, my Italian friend was asking me, was I not wrong to remain in Rome so late? He hoped my faintness was quite past, but he must himself see me to my carriage, and so he swept me forth, under cover of his courteous chatter, and the next day I sent him money for those who had to be rewarded.

"And for fear of Charles's rage about the infamy of bribing, said nothing, till he, in great anxiety about my feverish state, removed me from Rome. And then, my dear! I threw my arms about his neck and told him he should have a true and veritable cardinal's robe for his *Wolsey*, and in outrageous pride I cried: '*Ego hoc feci!*'" At which *I* gravely said: "That sounds like 'I have done something,' anyway it's I; but that '*fetchy*' word bothers me."

And she laughed and laughed, and said: "It means *I* did this! And I am ashamed to have used a Latin term to you, child. You must forgive me for it, but I *must* tell Charles that 'fetchy' word that bothered you — I must indeed, because he does so love his laugh!"

Then came the night when by chance I played an important part in one of their plays. My scenes were mostly

with Mr. Cathcart, and I only came in contact with Mr. Kean for a moment in one act. I was as usual frightened half out of my life, and as I stood in the entrance ready to go on, Mr. Kean smilingly caught my fingers as he was passing me, but their icy coldness brought him to a stand-still. "Why, why! bless my soul, what's the matter? this — this is not nervousness, is it?" he stammered.

I nodded my head. "Oh, good Lord!" he cried. "I say, Cathcart, here's a go — this poor child can't even open her mouth now——"

I tried to tell him I should be all right soon, but there was no time. The word of entrance came, and a *cue* takes the *pas* even in presence of a star. I went on, and as my lines were delivered clearly and distinctly, I saw the relieved face of Mr. Kean peering at us, and when Mr. Cathcart (who enacted my soldierly lover) gave me a sounding kiss upon the cheek as he embraced me in farewell, we plainly heard the old gentleman exclaim: "Well, well, really now, James, upon my word, you *are* coming on!" and Mr. Cathcart's broad shoulders shook with laughter rather than grief as he rushed from me.

When, later on, Mr. Kean took my hand to give it in betrothal to my lover, he found it so burning hot as to attract his attention.

Next night I did not play at all, but came to look on, and being invited to the dressing-room, Mr. Kean suddenly asked me: "Who are you, child?"

"No one," I promptly answered.

He laughed a little and nudged his Ellen, then went on: "I mean — who are your people?"

"I have none," I said, then quickly corrected, "except my mother."

"Ah, yes, yes, that's what we want to get at — who is that mother? for I recognize an inherited talent here — a natural grace and ease, impossible for one so young to acquire by any amount of effort."

I was a bit confused — I hesitated. Mrs. Kean asked: "Were both of your parents actors, child?"

Suddenly I broke into laughter. The thought of my mother as an actress filled me with amusement. "Oh, I beg your pardon," I cried, "I have no father, and my mother just works at sewing or nursing or housekeeping or anything she can get to do that's honest."

They looked disappointedly at each other, then Mrs. Kean brightened up and exclaimed: "Then it's foreign blood, Charles — you can see it in her use of her hands."

They turned expectantly to me. I thought of the big, smiling French-Canadian father, who had been the *bête noire* of my babyhood. My head drooped. "He, my father, was bad," I said, "his father and mother were from the south of France, but he was a horrid Canadian — my mother, though, is a true American," I proudly ended.

"That's it!" they exclaimed together, "the French blood!" and Mr. Kean nodded his head and tapped his brow and said: "You remember, Ellen, what I told you last night — I said 'temperament' — here it is in this small nobody; no offence to you, my girl. Here's our dear niece, who can't act at all, God bless her! our 'blood,' but no temperament. Now listen to me, you bright child!"

He pushed my hair back from my forehead, so that I must have looked quite wild, and went on: "I have seen you watch that dear woman over there, night after night; you admire her, I know." (I nodded hard.) "You think her a great, great way from you?" (More nods.) "A lifetime almost?" (Another nod.) "Then listen to what an old man, but a most experienced actor, prophesies for you. Without interest in high places, without help from anyone, except from the Great Helper of us all, you, little girl, daughter of the true American mother and the bad French father, will, inside of five years, be acting my wife's parts — and acting them well."

I could not help it, it seemed so utterly absurd, I laughed aloud. He smiled indulgently, and said: "It seems so funny — does it? Wait a bit, my dear, when my proph-

ecy comes true you will no longer laugh, and you will remember us."

He gave me his hand in farewell, so did his gracious wife, then with tears in my eyes I said: "I was only laughing at my own insignificance, sir, and I shall remember your kindness always, whether I succeed or not, just as I shall remember your great acting."

Simultaneously they patted me on the shoulder, and I left them. Then Mr. Kean put his arm about his wife and kissed her, I know he did, because I looked back and saw them thus reflected in the looking-glass. But did I not say they were love-birds?

Four years from that month I stood trembling and happy before the audience who generously applauded my "sleep-walking scene" in "Macbeth," and suddenly I seemed to hear the kind old voice making the astonishing prophecy, and joyed to think of its fulfilment, with a whole year to the good.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THIRD

Mr. E. L. Davenport, his Interference, his Lecture on Stage Business, his Error of Memory or too Powerful Imagination — Why I Remain a Dramatic Old Slipper — Contemptuous Words Arouse in Me a Dogged Determination to Become a Leading Woman before Leaving Cleveland.

JUST what was the occult power of the ballet over the manager's mind no one ever explained to me. I found my companions very every-day, good-natured, kind-hearted girls — pretty to look at, pleasant to be with, but to Mr. Ellsler they must have been a rare and radiant lot, utterly unmatchable in this world, or else he knew they had awful powers for evil and dared not provoke their "hoodoo." Whatever the reason, the fact remained, he was *afraid* to advance me one little step in name, even to utility woman; while, in fact, I was advanced to playing other people's parts nearly half the time, and the reason for this continued holding back was "fear of offending the other ballet-girls." Truly a novel position for a manager. One feels at once there must have been something unusually precious about such a ballet, and he feared to break the set. Anyway, before I got out, clear out, this happened:

A number of stars had spoken to me about my folly in remaining in the ballet, and when I told them Mr. Ellsler was afraid to advance me for fear of offending the other girls, they answered variously, and many advised me to break the "set" myself, saying if I left he would soon be after me and glad to engage me for first walking lady. But my crushed childhood had its effect,

I shall always lack self-assertion — I stayed on and this happened.

There was no regular heavy actress that season, and the old woman was a tiny little rag of a creature, not bigger than a doll. Mr. E. L. Davenport was to open in "Othello." Mrs. Effie Ellsler was to play the young *Desdemona* and I was to go on for *Emilia.* Mr. Davenport was a man of most reckless speech, but he was, too, an old friend of the Ellslers, calling them by their first names and meeting them with hearty greetings and many jests. So, when in the middle of a story to Mrs. Ellsler at rehearsal, the call came for *Othello, Desdemona,* and *Iago,* she exclaimed: "Excuse me, Ned, they are calling us," but he held her sleeve and answered, "Not you — it's me," and glancing hurriedly about, his eye met mine, and he added pleasantly, "You, my dear; they're calling *Desdemona.*"

I stood still. Mrs. Ellsler's round, black eyes snapped, but this man who blundered was a star and a friend. She tossed her head and petulantly pushed him from her toward the stage. He went on, and at the end of his speech:

> "This only is the witchcraft I have used;
> Here comes the lady, let her witness it."

he turned to face Mrs. Ellsler entering with *Iago* and her attendants. Looking utterly bewildered, he exclaimed: "Why, for God's sake, Effie, you are not going on for *Desdemona,* are you?"

Perhaps his dissatisfaction may be better understood if I mention that a young man twenty-three years old, who took tickets at the dress-circle door, called Mrs. Ellsler mother, and that middle-aged prosperity expressed itself in a startling number of inches about the waist of her short little body. Though her feet and hands were small in the extreme, they could not counteract the effect of that betraying stodginess of figure. Mrs. Ellsler, in answer to that rude question, laughed, and said: "Well,

I believe the leading woman generally does play *Desdemona?*"

"But," cried Mr. Davenport, "where's — w-who's *Emilia?*"

Mr. Ellsler took him by the arm and led him a little to one side. Several sharp exclamations escaped the star's lips, and at last, aloud and ending the conference, he said: "Yes, yes, John, I know anyone may have to twist about a bit now and then in a cast, but damn me if I can see why you don't cast Effie for *Emilia* and this girl for *Desdemona*—then they would at least look something like the parts. As it is now, they are both ridiculous!"

It was an awful speech, and the truth that was in it made it cut deep. There were those on the stage who momentarily expected the building to fall, so great was their awe of Mrs. Ellsler. The odd part of the unpleasant affair was that everyone was sorry for Mr. Ellsler, rather than for his wife.

Well, night came. I trailed about after *Desdemona* — picked up the fatal handkerchief — spoke a line here and there as Shakespeare wills she should, and bided my time as all *Emilias* must. Now I had noticed that many *Emilias* when they gave the alarm — cried out their "Murder! Murder!" against all the noise of the tolling bells, and came back upon the stage spent, and without voice or breath to finish their big scene with, and people thought them weak in consequence. A long hanging bar of steel is generally used for the alarm, and blows struck upon it send forth a vibrating clangor that completely fills a theatre. I made an agreement with the prompter that he was not to strike the bar until I held up my hand to him. Then he was to strike one blow each time I raised my hand, and when I threw up both hands he was to raise Cain, until I was on the stage again. So with throat trained by much shouting, when in the last act I cried:

> "I care not for thy sword; I'll make thee known,
> Though I lost twenty lives."

I turned, and crying:

"Help! help, ho! help!"

ran off shouting,

"The Moor has killed my mistress!"

then, taking breath, gave the long-sustained, ever-rising, blood-curdling cry:

"Murder! Murder! Murder!"

One hand up, and one long clanging peal of a bell.

"Murder! Murder! Murder!"

One hand up and bell.

"Murder! Murder! Murder!"

Both hands up, and pandemonium broken loose — and, oh, joy! the audience applauding furiously.

"One — two — three — four," I counted with closed lips, then with a fresh breath I burst upon the stage, followed by armed men, and with one last long full-throated cry of "Murder! the Moor has killed my mistress!" stood waiting for the applause to let me go on. A trick? yes, a small trick — a mere pretence to more breath than I really had, but it aroused the audience, it touched their imagination. They saw the horror-stricken woman racing through the night — waking the empty streets to life by that ever-thrilling cry of "Murder!" A trick if you like, but on the stage "success" justifies the means, and that night, under cover of the applause of the house, there came to me a soft clapping of hands and in muffled tones the words: "Bravo — bravo!" from *Othello*.

When the curtain had fallen and Mr. Davenport had

been before it, he came to me and holding out his hands, said: "You splendid-lunged creature — I want to apologize to you for the thoughts I harbored against you this morning." I smiled and glanced uneasily at the clock — he went on:

"I have always fancied my wife in *Emilia,* but, my girl, your readings are absolutely new sometimes, and your strength is — what's the matter? a farce yet? well, what of it? you, *you* have to go on in a farce after playing Shakespeare's *Emilia* with E. L. Davenport? I'm damned if I believe you!"

And I gathered up my cotton-velvet gown and hurried to my room to don calico dress, white cap and apron, and then rush down to the "property-room" for the perambulator I had to shove on, wondering what the star would think if he knew that his *Emilia* was merely walking on in the farce of "Jones's Baby," without one line to speak, the second and speaking nursemaid having very justly been given to one of the other girls. But the needless sending of me on, right after the noble part of *Emilia,* was evidently a sop thrown by my boldly independent manager to his ballet — Cerberus.

Heretofore stars had advised or chided me privately, but, oh, dear, oh, dear! next morning Mr. Davenport attacked Mr. Ellsler for "mismanagement," as he termed it, right before everybody. Among other things, he declared that it was a wound to his personal dignity as a star to have a girl who had supported him, "not acceptably, but brilliantly," in a Shakespearian tragedy, sent on afterward in a vulgar farce. Then he added: "Aside from artistic reasons and from justice to her — good Lord! John, are you such a fool you don't understand her commercial value? Here you have a girl, young and pretty" (always make allowances for the warmth of argument), "with rare gifts and qualifications, who handles her audience like a magician, and you cheapen her like this? Placing her in the highest position only to cast her down again to the lowest. If she is only fit for

the ballet, you insult your public by offering her in a leading part; if she's fit for the leading part, you insult her by lowering her to the ballet; but anyway I'm damned if I ever saw a merchant before who deliberately cheapened his own wares!"

If the floor could have opened I would have been its willing victim, and I am sure if Mr. Davenport had known that I would have to pay for every sharp word spoken, he would have restrained his too free speech for my sake — even though he was never able to do so for his own.

And what a pity it was, for he not only often wounded his friends, but worse still, he injured himself by flinging the most boomerang-like speeches at the public whenever he felt it was not properly appreciating him. He was wonderfully versatile, but though versatility is a requisite for any really good actor, yet for some mysterious reason it never meets with great success outside of a foreign theatre. The American public demands specialists — one man to devote himself solely to tragedy, another to romantic drama and duels, another to dress-suit satire. One woman to tears, another to laughter, and woe betide the star who, able to act both comedy and tragedy, ventures to do so; there will be no packed house to bear witness to the appreciation felt for such skill and variety of talent.

Mr. Davenport's vogue was probably waning when I first knew him. He had a certain intellectual following who delighted in the beautiful precision and distinctness of his reading of the royal Dane. He always seemed to me a *Hamlet* cut in crystal — so clear and pure, so cold and hard he was. The tender heart, the dread imaginings, the wounded pride and love, the fits and starts, the pain and passion that tortures *Hamlet* each in turn, were utterly incompatible with the fair, high-browed, princely philosopher Mr. Davenport presented to his followers. And after that performance I think he was most proud of his "horn-pipe" in the play of

"Black-Eyed Susan"; and he danced it with a swiftness, a lightness, and a limberness of joint that were truly astonishing in a man of his years. Legend said that in London it had been a great "go," had drawn — oh, fabulous shillings, not to mention pounds — but I never saw him play *William* to a good house, never — neither did I ever see the dance *encored.* The people did not appreciate versatility, and one night, while before the curtain in responding to a call, he began a bitter tirade against the taste of the public — offering to stand there and count how many there were in the house, and telling them that next week that same house would not hold all who would wish to enter, for there would be a banjo played by a woman, and such an intellectual treat was not often to be had, but they must not spend all their money, he was even now learning to swallow swords *and* play the *banjo;* he was an old dog now, but if they would have a little patience he would learn their favorite tricks for them, even though he could not heartily congratulate them on their intelligence, etc., etc. Oh, it was dreadful taste and so unjust, too, to abuse those who were there for the fault of those who remained away.

However, during the week's engagement of which I have been speaking, I had two nights in the ballet, then again I was cast for an important part. It was a white-letter day for me, professionally, for, thanks to Mr. Davenport, I learned for the first time the immense value of "business" alone, an action unsustained perhaps by a single word. I am not positive, but I believe the play was "A Soldier of Fortune" or "The Lion of St. Mark" — anyway it was a romantic drama. My part was not very long, but it had one most important scene with the hero. It was one of those parts that are talked about so much during the play that they gain a sort of fictitious value. At rehearsal I could not help noticing how fixedly Mr. Davenport kept gazing at me. His frown grew deeper and deeper as I read my lines, and I was growing most desperately frightened, when he suddenly exclaimed:

"Wait a minute!" I stopped; he went on roughly, still staring hard at me, "I don't know whether you are worth breaking a vow for or not."

Naturally I had nothing to say. He walked up the stage; as he came down, he said: "I've kept that promise for ten years, but you seem such an honest little soul about your work — I've a good mind, yes, I have a mind——"

He sat down on the edge of the prompt-table, and though he addressed himself seemingly to me alone, the whole company were listening attentively.

"When I first started out starring I honestly believed I had a mission to teach other less experienced actors how to act. I had made a close study of the plays I was to present, as well as of my own especial parts in them, and I actually thought it was my duty to impart my knowledge to those actors who were strange in them. Yes, that's the kind of a fool I was. I used to explain and describe, and show how, and work and sweat, and for my pains I received behind my back curses for keeping them so long at rehearsals, and before my face stolid indifference or a thinly veiled implication that I was grossly insulting them by my minute directions. Both myself and my voice were pretty well used up before I realized that my work had been wasted, my good intentions damned, that I had not been the leaven that could lighten the lump of stupid self-satisfaction we call the 'profession'; and I took solemn oath to myself never again to volunteer any advice, any suggestion, any hint as to reading, or business, or make-up to man or woman in any play of mine. If they acted well, all right; if they acted ill, all right too. If I found them infernal sticks, I'd leave them sticks. I'd demand just one thing, my *cue*. As long as I got the word to speak on, all the rest might go to the devil! Rehearsals shortened, actors had plenty of time for beer and pretzels; and as I ceased to try to improve their work, they soon called me a good fellow. And now you come along, willing

to work, knowing more than some of your elders, yet actually believing there is still something for you to learn. Ambitious, keenly observant, you tempt me to teach you some business for this part, and yet if I do I suppose what goes in at one ear will go out of the other!"

Embarrassed silence on my part.

"Well," he went on, whimsically, "I see this is not your day for making protestations, but I'm going to give you the business, and if you choose to ignore it at night — why, that will serve me right for breaking my promise."

"Mr. Davenport," I said, "I always try to remember what is told me, and I don't see why I should not remember what you say; goodness knows you speak plainly enough," at which, to my troubled surprise, everyone, star and all, burst out laughing, but presently he returned to the play.

"See here," he said, "you, the adventuress, are worsted in this scene. You sit at the table. I have forced you to sign this paper, yet you say to me: 'You are a fool!' Now, how are you going to say it?"

"I don't know yet," I answered, "I have not heard the whole play through."

"What's that got to do with it?" he asked, sharply.

"Why," I said, "I don't know the story — I don't know whether she is really your enemy, or only injures you on impulse; whether she truly loves anyone, or only makes believe love."

"Good!" he cried, "good! that is sound reasoning. Well, you *are* my enemy, you love no one, so you see your 'fool' is given with genuine feeling. It's years since the line has drawn fire, but you do this business, and see. You sit, I stand at the opposite side of the table. You write your name — you are supposed to be crushed. I believe it and tower triumphantly over you. The audience believes it too. Now you lay down your pen — but carefully, mind you, carefully; then close the

inkstand, and with very evident caution place it out of danger of a fall. Be sure you take your time, there are places where deliberation is as effective as ever rush and hurry can be. Then with your cheek upon your hand, or your chin on your clasped hands — any attitude you fancy will do — look at me good and long, and *then* speak your line. Have you thought yet how to deliver it?"

"Well," I answered, hesitatingly, "to call you a fool in a colloquial tone would make people laugh, I think, and — and the words don't fit a declamatory style. I should think a rather low tone of sneering contempt would be best," and he shouted loudly: "You've hit it square on the head! Now let's see you do it to-night. Don't look so frightened, my girl, only take your time, don't hurry. I've got to stand there till you speak, if you take all night. Be deliberate; you see, you have played all the rest so fiercely fast, the contrast will tell."

The night came. Cornered, check-mated, I slowly signed the paper, wiped the pen, closed the inkstand, and set it aside. He stood like a statue. The silence reached the house. I stretched out my arms and rested my crossed hands lightly on the table. I met his glance a moment, then, with a curling lip, let my eyes sweep slowly down length of body to boot-tip and back again, rose slowly, made a little "pouf" with lips and wave of hand, and contemptuously drawled: "My friend, you are a fool!" while, swift and sharp, came the applause Mr. Davenport at least had anticipated. The act ended almost immediately, and I hurried to him, crying: "Oh, thank you so much, Mr. Davenport. I never, never could have found applause in a speech like that."

"Ah, it was the business, child, not the speech. Always try to find good business."

"Suit the action to the word?" I laughed.

"Yes," he answered, "and remember, Miss, actions speak louder than words, too! But, my dear, it's a comfort to teach you anything; and when I saw you trying

so carefully to follow directions to-night, I swear I almost prayed for the applause you were so honestly earning. You are a brick, my girl! oh, I don't mean one of those measly little common building bricks — I mean a great lovely Roman tile!"

And when, in God's good time, success came to me, as I entered the green-room at the Fifth Avenue one evening, a tall man in a gray suit released himself from a bevy of pretty women, and coming over to me, held out his hands, saying: "Did I ever make any remarks to you about building materials?" and, laughingly, I answered: "Yes, sir, you said something about bricks some years ago."

And while I ran away to change, he called after me: "Say, 'Jones's Baby' isn't on to-night, is it?" and immediately began to tell about *Emilia,* and such is the power of imagination that he declared "She raged up and down behind the scenes crying 'Murder,' till the very house broke loose, and *right through all the pealing of the bells high and clear, you heard her voice topping everything!*"

I was resting and getting breath while the bell clanged, remember, but so much for human memory.

It is strange how often the merest accident or the utterance of a chance word may harden wavering intentions into a fixed resolve. Though I am not aggressive, there is in me a trace of bull-dog tenacity, made up of patient endurance and sustained effort. Rather slow to move, when I am aroused I simply *cannot* let go my hold while breath is in me, unless I have had my will, have attained my object.

Perhaps people may wonder why I retained my anomalous position in that theatre — why I did not follow the advice of some of the lady stars, who gave me a kindly thought and word now and then. And at the risk of giving them a poor opinion of my wisdom, I present the reason that actuated me. One day at rehearsal, while waiting for the stage to be reset, several of the

actresses gossiped about theatrical matters. One had a letter from a friend who announced her advance to "first walking lady," which turned the talk to promotion generally, and laughingly she asked me: "What line of business shall you choose, Clara, when your turn comes?" but before I could reply, the eldest woman present sneered: "Oh, she can save herself the trouble of choosing; if she's ever advanced it will be in some other city than this."

I was astonished; I had just made one of my small hits, and had a nice little notice in the paper, but it did not occur to me that *envy* could sustain itself, keeping warm and strong and bitter on such slight nourishment as that. And then, she of the letter, answered: "Why, Clara's getting along faster than anyone else in the company, and I shall expect to see her playing leading business before so very many seasons pass by."

"Leading business here?" cried the other, "I guess not!"

"Oh," laughed the first, "I see, you mean that Mrs. Ellsler will claim the leading parts as long as she lives? Well, then, I shall expect to see Clara playing the leading juveniles."

"Well, you go right on expecting, and your hair will be as gray as mine is, when she gets into any line of business in this town!"

Unspeakably wounded, I asked, timidly: "But if I work hard and learn to act well, can't I hold a position as well as anyone else?"

She looked contemptuously at me, and then answered: "No, you must be a fool if you suppose that after standing about in the ballet for months on end that Cleveland will ever accept you in a respectable line of business. You've got to go to some other place, where you are not known, and then come back as a stranger, if you want to be accepted here."

A dull anger began to burn in me — there was something so suggestive of shame in the words, "Some other

place, where you are not known." I had nothing to hide. I could work, and by and by I should be able to act as well as any of them — better perhaps. I felt my teeth come together with a snap, the bull-dog instinct was aroused. I looked very steadily at the sneering speaker and said: "I shall never leave this theatre till I am leading woman." And they all laughed, but it was a promise, and all these provoking years I was by way of keeping it. The undertaking was hard, perhaps it was foolish, but of the group of women who laughed at me that day every one of them lived to see my promise kept to the letter. When I left Cleveland it was to go as leading woman to Cincinnati, one season before I entered New York.

But after I had at last escaped the actual ballet, and was holding a recognized position, I was still treated quite *en haut — en bas* by the management. Mr. and Mrs. Ellsler had acquired the old-shoe habit. I was the easy old dramatic slipper, which it was pleasant to slip on so easily, but doubly pleasant to be able to shake off without effort.

That you may thoroughly understand, I will explain that I was an excellent *Amelia* in "The Robbers" when a rather insignificant star played the piece, but when a Booth or some star of like magnitude appeared as *Charles de Moor*, then the easy slipper was dropped off, and Mrs. Ellsler herself played *Amelia*. Any part belonging to me by right could be claimed by that lady, if she fancied it, and if she wearied of it, it came back to me. When we acted in the country in the summer-time, at Akron or Canton, where there were real theatres, she played *Parthenia* or *Pauline* in the "Lady of Lyons," or any other big part; but if the next town was smaller, I played *Parthenia* or *Pauline* or what not. Because I had once been in the ballet I had become an old pair of dramatic slippers, to be slipped on or kicked off at will — rather humiliating to the spirit, but excellent training for the growing actress, and I learned much from

these queer "now-you're-in-it and now you're-not-in-it" sort of casts, and having much respect and admiration for Mr. Ellsler, I fortunately followed in his wake, rather than in that of any woman. He was one of the most versatile of actors. *Polonius* or *Dutchy* (the opposite to Chanfrau's *Mose*), crying old men or broad farce-comedy old men. Often he doubled *King Duncan* and *Hecate* in "Macbeth," singing any of the witches when a more suitable *Hecate* was on hand — acquainted with the whole range of the "legitimate," his greatest pleasure was in acting some "bit" that he could elaborate into a valuable character. I remember the "switchman" in "Under the Gaslight" — it could not have been twenty lines long, yet he made of him so cheery, so jolly, so kindly an old soul, everyone was sorry when he left the stage. He always had a good notice for the work, and a hearty reception ever after the first night. It was from him I learned my indifference to the length of my parts. The value of a character cannot always be measured by the length and number of its speeches, but I think the only word of instruction he ever gave me was: "Speak loud — speak distinctly," which was certainly good as far as it went. He was the most genial of men, devotedly fond of children, he was "Uncle John" to them all, and while never famous for the size of the salaries he paid, he was so good a friend to his people that he often had trouble in making desirable changes, and the variegated and convoluted falsehoods he invented in order to get rid of one excessively bad old actor with an affectionate heart, who wished to stay at a reduced salary, must lay heavy on his conscience to this hour.

I used to wonder why he had never taken to starring, but he said he had not had enough self-assertion. He was a hard-working man, but he seemed to lack resolution. He had opinions — not convictions. He was always second in his own theatre — often letting "I dare not wait upon I would." After years of acquaintance-

ship, not to say friendship, when my ambition had been aroused, and I turned hopeful eyes toward New York, Mr. Ellsler opposed me bitterly, telling me I must be quite mad to think that the metropolis would give me a hearing. He said many pleasant and encouraging things, or wrote them, since I was in Cincinnati then. Among them I find: "The idea of your acting in New York; why, better actresses than you are, or can ever hope to be, have been driven broken-hearted from its stage. Do you suppose you could tie the shoe of Eliza Logan, one of the greatest actresses that ever lived — but yet not good enough for New York? How about Julia Dean, too? Go East, and be rejected, and then see what manager will want you in the West."

Verily not an encouraging friend. Again I find: "Undoubtedly you are the strongest, the most original, and the youngest leading lady in the profession — but why take any risk? why venture into New York, where you may fail? at any rate, wait *ten years*, till you are surer of yourself."

Good heavens! If I was original and strong in the West, why should I wait ten years before venturing into the East?

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOURTH

I recall the Popularity and too Early Death of Edwin Adams.

I HEAR many tales of the insolence of stars — of their overbearing manners, and their injustice to "little people," as the term goes; but personally I have seen almost nothing of it. In the old days stars were generally patient and courteous in their manners to the supporting companies.

Among the stars whose coming was always hailed with joy was Edwin Adams, he of the golden voice, he who should have prayed with fervor, both day and night: "Oh, God! protect me from my friends!" He was so popular with men, they sought him out, they followed him, and they generally expressed their liking through the medium of food and drink. Like every other sturdy man that's worth his salt, he could stand off an enemy, but he was as weak as water in the hands of a friend, and thus it came about that he often stood in slippery places, and though he fell again and again, yet was he forgiven as often as he sinned, and heartily welcomed back the next season, so great was his power to charm.

He was not handsome, he was not heroic in form, but there was such dash and go, such sincerity and naturalness in all his work, that whether he was love-making or fighting, singing or dying, he convinced you he was the character's self, whether that character was the demented victim of the *Bastille*, young *Rover* in "Wild Oats," or that most gallant gentleman *Mercutio*, in which no greater ever strode than that of Edwin Adams. His buoyancy of spirit, his unconquerable gayety made

it seem but natural his passion for jesting should go with him to the very grave. Many a fine *Mercutio* gives:

"——— a plague o' both your houses!"

with a resentful bitterness that implies blame to *Romeo* for his "taking off," which would be a most cruel legacy of grief and remorse to leave to his young friend — but Adams was that brave *Mercutio:*

"That gallant spirit that aspired the clouds,
Which too untimely here did scorn the earth."

and whose last quips, coming faintly across paling lips, expressed still good-natured fun, and so:

"——— a plague o' both your houses!"

but no blame at all.

His grace of movement and his superb voice were his greatest gifts. Most stars had one rather short play which they reserved for Saturday nights, that they might be able to catch their night train *en route* for the next engagement; so it happened that Mr. Adams, having bravely held temptation from him during the first five nights, generally yielded to the endearments of his friends by the sixth, and was most anyone but himself when he came to dress for the performance of a play most suggestively named: "The Drunkard." It was a painful and a humiliating sight to see him wavering uncertainly in the entrance. All brightness, intelligence, and high endeavor extinguished by liquor's murky fog. His apologies were humble and evidently sincere, but the sad memory was one not to be forgotten.

I had just married, and we were in San Francisco. I was rehearsing for my engagement there. The papers said Mr. Adams had arrived from Australia and had been carried on a stretcher to a hotel, where, with his devoted wife by his side, he lay dying. A big lump rose

in my throat, tears filled my eyes. I asked my husband, who had greatly admired the actor, and who was glad to pay him any courtesy or service possible, to call, leave cards, and if he saw Mrs. Adams, which was improbable, to try to coax her out for a drive, if but for half an hour, and to deliver a message of remembrance and sympathy from me to her husband. To his surprise, he was admitted by the dying man's desire to his room, where the worn, weary, self-contained, ever gently smiling wife sat and, like an automaton, fanned hour by hour, softly, steadily fanned breath between those parched lips, that whispered a gracious message of congratulation and thanks.

Mrs. Adams never left him, scarce took her eyes from him. Poor wife! who knew she could hold him but a few hours longer.

My husband was deeply moved, and when he tried to describe to me that wasted frame — those helpless hands, whose faintly twitching fingers could no longer pluck at the folded sheet, my mind obstinately refused to accept the picture, and instead, through a blur of tears, I saw him as on that last morning, when in his prime, strong and gentle, at his rehearsal of "Enoch Arden," he said to me: "I am disappointed to the very heart, Clara, that you are not my *Annie Lee*."

He took his hat off, he drew his hand across his eyes. "I can't find her," he said, with that touch of pathos that made his voice irresistible; "no, I have not found her yet — they are not innocent and brave! They are bouncing, buxom creatures or they are whimpering little milk-sops. They are never fisher-maidens, flower-pure, yet strong as the salt of the sea! She loved them both, Clara, yet she was no more weak nor bad than when, with childish lips, she innocently promised to be 'a little wife to both' the angry lads — to Philip and young Enoch! Now your eyes are sea-eyes, and your voice — oh, I am disappointed! I thought I should find my *Annie* here!"

And so I see him now as I think with tender sorrow of the actor who was so strong and yet so weak — dear Ned Adams!

When Mr. Joseph Jefferson came to us I found his acting nothing less than a revelation. Here, in full perfection, was the style I had feebly, almost blindly been reaching for. This man, this poet of *comedy,* as he seemed to me, had so perfectly wedded nature to art that they were indeed one. Here again I found the immense value of "business" the most minute, the worth of restraint, if you had power to restrain, and learned that his perfect naturalness was the result of his exquisite art in cutting back and training nature's too great exuberance.

I was allowed to play *Meenie,* his daughter, in the play of "Rip Van Winkle," and my delight knew no bounds. He was very gentle and kind, he gave me pleasant words of praise for my work; he was very great, and — and his eyes were fine, and I approved of his chin, too, and I was, in fact, rapidly blending the actor and the man in one personality. In the last act, when kneeling at his feet, during our long wait upon the stage, I knelt and adored! and he — oh, Mr. Jefferson, Mr. Jefferson, that I should say it, but *did* you not hold my fingers unnecessarily close when you made some mild little remarks that were not in the play, but which filled my breast with quite outrageous joy, and pride — indeed, my crop of young affections, always rather a sparse growth, came very near being gathered into a small sheaf and laid at your feet.

Fortunately, I learned in time that there was an almost brand-new wife in the hotel next door, and I looked at him with big, reproachful eyes and kept my fingers to myself, and wisely put off the harvesting of my affections until some distant day.

Mind you, I was well within my rights in this matter. Girls always fall in love with stars — some fall in love with all of them, but that must be fatiguing; besides, as I said before, my affections were of such sparse growth

they could not go round. Yet since I could honor thus but one star, I must say I look back with complete approval upon my early choice, and the shock to my heart did not prevent me from treasuring up some kindly words of advice from the artist-actor anent the making-up of eyes for the stage.

Said he to me one evening: "My girl, I want to speak to you about that 'make-up' you have on your eyes."

"Yes, sir?" I answered, interrogatively, feeling very hot and uncomfortable, "have I too much on?"

"Well, yes," he said, "I think you have, though you have much less than most women wear.'

"Oh, yes," I hurriedly interposed, "there was a French dancer here who covered nearly a third of her eyelids with a broad blue-black band of pomatum, and she said——"

"Oh," he protested, "I know, she said it made the eyes large and lustrous, and as you see yourself in the glass it does seem to have that effect; but, by the way, what do you think of my eyes?"

And with truth and promptness, I made answer: "I think they're lovely."

My unexpected candor proved rather confusing, for for a moment he "Er-er-erd," and finally said: "I meant as a feature of acting, they are good acting eyes, aren't they? Well, you don't find *them* made up, do you? Now listen to me, child, always be guided as far as possible by nature. When you make up your face, you get powder on your eyelashes, nature made them dark, so you are free to touch the lashes themselves with ink or pomade, but you should not paint a great band about your eye, with a long line added at the corner to rob it of every bit of expression. And now as to the beauty this lining is supposed to bring, some night when you have time I want you to try a little experiment. Make up your face carefully, darken your brows and the lashes of *one eye;* as to the other eye, you must load the lashes with black pomade, then draw a black line beneath the

eye, and a broad line on its upper lid, and a final line out from the corner. The result will be an added lustre to the made-up eye, a seeming gain in brilliancy; but now, watching your reflection all the time, move slowly backward from the glass, and an odd thing will happen, that made-up eye will gradually grow smaller and smaller, until, at a distance much less than that of the auditorium, it will really look more like a round black hole than anything else, and will be absolutely without expression. You have an admirable stage eye — an actor's eye, sensitive, expressive, well opened, it's a pity to spoil it with a load of blacking."

And I said, gratefully: "I'll never do it again, sir," and I never have, first from respect to a great actor's opinion, and gratitude for his kindly interest, later having tried his experiment, from the conviction that he was right, and finally because my tears would have sent inky rivulets down my cheeks had I indulged in black-banded eyes. So in all these years of work, just once, in playing a tricky, treacherous, plotting female, that I felt should be a close-eyed, thin-lipped creature, I have painted and elongated my eyes, otherwise I have kept my promise "not to do it again."

I met Mr. Jefferson in Paris at that dreadful time when he was threatened with blindness, and I never shall forget his gentle patience, his marvelous courage. That was a day of real rejoicing to me, when the news came that his sight was saved. Blindness coming upon any man is a horror, but to a man who can see nature as Joseph Jefferson sees her it would have been an almost incredible cruelty.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIFTH

I See an Actress Dethroned — I Make Myself a Promise, for the World Does Move.

TO be discarded by the public, that is the *bête noire,* the unconquerable dread and terror of the actor. To fail in the great struggle for supremacy is nothing compared to the agony of falling after the height has once been won.

Few people can think of the infamous casting down of the great column Vendôme without a shiver of pain — the smashing of the memorial tablet, the shattering of the statue, these are sights to shrink from, yet what does such shrinking amount to when compared to the pain of seeing a human being thrust from the sunlight of public popularity into the darkness of obscurity?

I was witness once to the discrowning of an actress, and if I could forget the anguish of her eyes, the pallor beneath her rouge, I would be a most grateful woman.

She had been handsome in her prime, handsome in the regular-featured, statuesque fashion so desirable for an actress of tragic parts; but Mrs. P—— (for I shall call her only by that initial, as it seems to me that naming her fully would be unkind) had reached, yes, had passed, middle age and had wandered far into distant places, had known much sorrow, and, alas, for her, had not noticed that her profession, like everything alive, like the great God-made world itself, moved, moved, moved! So not noticing, she, poor thing, stood still in her method of work, loyally doing her best in the style of acting that had been so intensely admired in her triumphant youth.

She had most successfully starred in Cleveland years before, but at the time I speak of she was returning

from distant parts, widowed and poor, yet quite, quite confident of her ability to please the public, and with plans all made to star two, possibly three, years, long enough to secure a little home and tiny income, when she would retire gracefully from the sight of the regretful public. Meantime she entreated Mr. Ellsler, if possible, to give her an engagement, that she might earn money enough to carry her to New York and see the great agents there.

By some unlooked-for chance the very next week was open, and rather tremulously as manager, but kind-heartedly as man, Mr. Ellsler engaged her for that week.

The city was billed accordingly: "Mrs. P——, the Queen of Tragedy!"—"The celebrated Mrs. P——, Cleveland's great favorite!"—"Especial engagement of Mrs. P——!" etc., etc.

I had a tiny part in the old Grecian tragedy she opened in. I came early, as was my wont, and when dressed went out to look at the house—good heavens! I gasped. Poor? it was worse than poor. Bad? it was worse than bad. My heart sank for her as I recalled how, that morning, she had asked, with a little nonchalant air of: "It doesn't really matter, of course, but do the people here throw their flowers still, or do they send them up over the footlights?" Flowers? Oh, poor Mrs. P——!

The overture had ended before she came out of her dressing-room, so she had no warning of what the house was like. She was all alight with pleasant anticipation. At a little distance she looked remarkably well; her Grecian robes hung gracefully, her hair was arranged and filleted correctly and becomingly, her movements were assured; only looking at the deeply drawn lines about her mouth, made one regret that her opening speeches referred so distinctly to her "dewy youth"; but Cleveland was well used to that sort of contradiction, and I might have taken heart of grace for her if only she had not looked so very pleased and happy.

The opening scene of the old-fashioned play was well

on when the star appeared, and smiling graciously — faced the almost empty house. She halted — she gave the sort of sudden gasp that a dash of icy water in the face might cause. The humiliating half-dozen involuntary hand-claps that had greeted her fell into silence as she came fully into view, where she stood dismayed, stricken — for she was an old actress and she read the signs aright, she knew this was the great *taboo*.

Her face whitened beneath her rouge, her lips moved silently. One moment she turned her back squarely upon the audience, for she knew her face was anguished, and moved by the same instinct that makes an Indian draw the blanket across his dying face, or the wounded animal seek deepest solitude, she sought to hide *her* suffering from the coldly observant few.

With the light stricken from her eyes they looked dull and sunken, while every nerve and muscle of her poor face seemed a-quiver. It was a dreadful moment for us who looked on and understood.

Presently she clinched her hands, drew a long breath, and facing about, took up the burden of the play, and in cold, flat tones began her part. She did her best in the old, stilted declamatory style, that was as dead as many of the men and women were who used to applaud it. Once only the audience warmed to her a trifle, and as she accepted their half-hearted "call," her sad eyes roved over the empty spaces of the house, a faint, tired smile touched her lips, while two great tears coursed down her cheeks. It was the moment of renunciation! They denied her right to the crown of popularity, and she, with that piteous smile, bowed to their verdict, as an actress must.

At the curtain's final fall her stardom was over. She went very quietly to Mr. Ellsler and gave him back the engagement he had granted her, saying, simply: "They do not want me any longer."

A short time after that, she sat one evening in Mr. Ellsler's family box, and with wide, astonished eyes gazed

at the packed house which greeted the jig, the clog, the song, the banjo of Miss Lotta, whose innocent deviltries were bringing her a fortune, and when, in response to a "call," instead of appearing, Miss Lotta thrust her foot and ankle out beyond the curtain and wriggled them at the delighted crowd, poor Mrs. P—— drew her hand across her forehead and said, in bewildered tones: "But — I don't understand!"

No, she could not understand, and Miss Lotta had not yet faced New York, hence John Brougham, the witty, wise, and kindly Irish gentleman, had not yet had his opportunity of summing up the brilliant and erratic star, as he did later on in these words: "Act, acting, actress? what are you thinking of? she's no actress, she's — why, she's a little dramatic cocktail!" which was a delicious Broughamism and truthful withal.

But that sad night, when Mrs. P—— first set her feet in the path of obscurity, I took to myself a lesson, and said: "While I live, I will move. I will not stand still in my satisfaction, should success ever come to me — but will try to keep my harness bright by action, in at least an effort to keep abreast with the world, for verily, verily, it does move!"

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIXTH

Mr. Lawrence Barrett the Brilliant and his Brother Joseph the Unfortunate.

THERE were few stars with whom I took greater pleasure in acting than with Mr. Lawrence Barrett. I sometimes wonder if even now this profession really knows what great reason it has to be proud of him. He was a man respected by all, admired by many, and if loved but by few, theirs was a love so profound and so tender it amply sufficed.

We are a censorious people, and just as our greatest virtue is generosity in giving, so our greatest fault is the eagerness with which we seek out the mote in our neighbor's eye, without feeling the slightest desire for the removal of the beam in our own eye. Thus one finds that the first and clearest memory actors have of Mr. Barrett is of his irascible temper and a certain air of superiority, not of his erudition, of the high position he won socially as well as artistically, of the almost Titanic struggle of his young manhood with adverse circumstances.

Nor does that imply the slightest malice on their part. Actors, as a family trait, have a touch of childishness about them which they come by honestly enough. We all know the farther we get from infancy the weaker the imagination grows. Now it is imagination that makes the man an actor, so it is not wonderful if with the powerful creative fancy of childhood he should also retain a touch of its petulance and self-consciousness. Thus to many actors Mr. Barrett's greatness is lost sight of in the memory of some dogmatic utterance or sharp reproval that wounded self-love.

It would seem like presumption for me to offer any word of praise for the artistic work of his later years; the world remembers it; the world knows, too, how high he climbed, how secure was his position; but twice I have heard the stories of his earlier years — some from the lips of his brave wife, once from the lips of that beloved brother Joe, who was yet his dread and sorrow — and at each telling my throat ached at the pain of it, while my nerves thrilled with admiration for such endurance, such splendid determination.

A paradox is, I believe, something seemingly absurd, yet true in fact. In that case I was not so very far wrong, in spite of general laughter, when, after my first rehearsal with him, I termed Mr. Barrett a man of cold enthusiasm. "But," one cried to me, "you stupid — that's a paradox! don't you see your words contradict each other?"

"Well," I answered, with shame-faced obstinacy, "perhaps they do, but they are not contradicted by *him*. You all call him icy-cold, and *I* know he is truly enthusiastic over the possibilities of this play, so that makes what I call cold enthusiasm, however par-a-paradoxy (?) it sounds."

And now, after all the years, I can approve that childish judgment. He was a man whose intellectual enthusiasm was backed by a cold determination that would never let him say "die" while he had breath in his body and a stage to rehearse on.

I have a miserable memory for names, and often in the middle of a remark the name I intended to mention will pass from my remembrance utterly; so, all my life, I have had the very bad habit of trying to make my hearers understand whom I meant by imitating or mentioning some trait peculiar to the nameless one, and I generally succeeded.

As, for instance, when I wished to tell whom I had seen taking away a certain book, I said: "It was Mr. — er — er, oh, you know, Mr. — er, why this man," and I pulled in my head like a turtle and hitched up my shoul-

ders to my ears, and the anxious owner cried: "Oh, Thompson has it, has he?" Thompson having, so far as *we* could see, no neck at all — my pantomime suggested his name.

Everyone can recall the enormous brow of Mr. Barrett, and how beneath his great, burning eyes his cheeks hollowed suddenly in, thinning down to his sensitive mouth. I was on the stage in New Orleans, the first morning of my engagement there (I was under Mr. Daly's management, but he had loaned me for a fortnight), and I started out with: "Mr. Daly said to please ask Mr. ——," away went the name — goodness gracious, should I forget my own name next!

The stage manager suggested: "Mr. Rogers."

"No, oh, no! I mean Mr. — er — er," and I trailed off helplessly.

"Mr. Seymour?" offered a lady.

"No, no! that's not it!" I cried; "why, goodness mercy me! you all know whom I mean — the — the actor with the *hungry eyes?*"

"Oh, Barrett!" they shouted, all save one voice, that with a mighty laugh cried out: "That's my brother Larry, God bless him! no one could miss that description, for sure he looks as hungry to-day as ever he did when he felt hungry to his heart's core!"

And so it was that I first met poor Joe Barrett, who worshipped the brother whose sore torment he was. For this great, broad-shouldered, ruddy-faced fellow with the boyish laugh had ever in his veins the craving for liquor — that awful inherited appetite that can nullify prayer and break down the most fixed determination.

"Ah!" he cried to me, "no one, no one can ever know how good Larry has been to me, for while he is fighting and struggling to rise, every little while some lapse of mine drags him back a bit. Yet he never casts me off — never disowns me. He has had to discharge me for the sake of discipline here, but he has re-engaged me. He has sent me away, but he has taken me back again. I

promise, and fail to keep my promise. I fall, and he picks me up. Through the cursed papers I have dragged my brother through the mud, but the sweet Saviour could hardly forgive me more fully than Larry does, for, look you, he never forgets that I am the son of my father, who was accursed before me, while he is the son of our poor mother — blessed be her name! It isn't that I don't try. I keep straight until the agony of longing begins to turn into a mad desire to do bodily harm to someone — anyone, and then, fearing worse, I drink my fill, and the papers find me out, and are not content to tell of the disgraceful condition of Joseph Barrett, but must add, always, 'the brother of the prominent actor, Mr. Lawrence Barrett.' Poor Larry! poor little delicate chap that he used to be, with his big, brainy head — too heavy for his weak neck and frail body to carry."

And then he told me of their sorrowful life, their poverty. The often-idle father and his dislike for the delicate boy, whose only moment of happiness was when the weary mother, the poor supper over, sat for a little to breathe and rest, and held his heavy head upon her loving breast, while Joe sang his songs or told all the happenings of the day.

That happy Joe, who had no pride and was quite as satisfied without a seat to his small trousers as with one! Then he told me how hard it was for Lawrence to learn; how he had to grind and grind at the simplest lesson, but once having acquired it, it was his for life.

"Why, even now," said he, "in confidence I'm telling you, my brother is studying like a little child at French, and it does seem that he cannot learn it. He works so desperately over it, a doctor has warned him he must choose between French and his many "parts" or break down from overwork. But he *will* go on hammering at his *parlez-vous* until he learns them or dies trying."

"If you were to live with your brother, might not that help to keep you strong?" I asked.

"Now, my dear little woman," he smiled, "Larry is human, in some respects, if he is almost God-like toward me. Remember he has a young family now, and though his wife is as good as gold and always patient with me, I am not the kind of example a man would care to place before his little ones, and as Lawrence is devoured with ambition for them and their future, he rightly guards them from too close contact with the drag and curse of his own life, in whom he, and he alone, can see the sturdy tow-headed brother of the old boyish days, who saved him from many and many a kick and thump his delicate body could ill have borne."

Joe told me of his dead wife — Viola Crocker that was — the niece of Mrs. Bowers and Mrs. Conway; of their happiness and their misery. Describing himself as having been "in heaven or in hell — without any betwixts and betweens." His devotion to me was very great. He was "hard-up" for money, as the men express it, but he would manage to bring me a single rose or one bunch of grapes or a half-dozen mushrooms or some such small offering every day; and learning of his bitter mortification because he could not hire a carriage to take me out to see the curious old French cemetery, I made him supremely happy by expressing a desire to ride in one of those funny bob-tailed, mule-drawn street-cars — the result being a trip by my mother, Mr. Barrett, and myself to the famous cemetery.

I don't know that I ever heard anyone sing Irish and Scottish ballads more tenderly, more pathetically than did Joe Barrett, and as my mother was very fond of old songs, he used to sit and sing one after another for her. That day there was no one in the crawling little car but we three, and presently he began to sing. But, oh, what was it that he sang? Irish, unmistakably — a lament, rising toward its close into the *keen* of some clan. It wrung the very heart.

"Don't!" I exclaimed. My mother's face was turned away, my throat ached, even Joe's eyes had filled. "What is it?" I asked.

"I don't know its name," he answered, "I have always put it on programmes as 'A Lament.' I learned it from an Irish emigrant-lad, who was from the North, and who was dying fast from consumption and home-hunger. Is not that wail chilling? As he gave the song it seemed like a message from the dying."

At the end of our stroll among the flowers and trees and past those strange stone structures that look so like serious-minded bake-ovens, having to wait for a car, we sat on a stone bench, and in that quiet city of the dead Joe's voice rose, tenderly reverent, in that simple air that was yet an anguish of longing, followed by a wail for the dead.

My mother wept silently. I said, softly: "It's a plaint and a farewell," and Joe brought his eyes back from the great cross, blackly silhouetted against the flaming sky, and slowly said: "Beloved among women, it is a message — a message from the dying or the dead, believe that."

And a time came when — well, when *almost* I did believe that.

Later on, when Mr. Barrett stood second only to Mr. Booth in his profession, well established, well off, well dressed, polished and refined of manner, aye, and genial, too, to those he liked, I came by accident upon a most gracious act of his and, following it up, found him deep in a conspiracy to deceive a stricken woman into receiving the aid her piteous determination to stand alone made impossible to offer openly. I looked at the generous, prosperous, intellectual, intensely active gentleman, surrounded by clever wife and the pretty, thoroughly educated daughters, who were chaperoned in all their walks to and from park or music-lesson or shopping-trip, and I wondered at the distance little "Larry," with the heavy head and frail body, had traveled, and bowed respectfully to such magnificent energy.

Even then there arose a cry from the profession that Mr. Barrett was dictatorial, that he assumed airs of su-

periority. Mr. Barrett was wrapped up, soul and body, in the proper production of the play in hand. He was keenly observant and he was sensitive. When an actor had his mind fixed upon a smoke or a glass of beer, and cared not one continental dollar whether the play failed or succeeded, so long as he got his "twenty dollars per —," Mr. Barrett knew it, and became "dictatorial" in his effort to force the man into doing his work properly. I worked with him, both as a nobody and as somebody, and I know that an honest effort to comprehend and carry out his wishes was recognized and appreciated.

As for his airs of superiority — well, the fact is he *was* superior to many. He was intellectual and he was a student to the day of his death. When work at the theatre was over he turned to study. He never was well acquainted with Tom and Dick, nor yet with Harry. His back fitted a lamp-post badly. He would not have known how "to jolly the crowd." He was not a full, voluminous, and ready story-teller for the boys, who called him cold and hard. God knows he had needed the coldness and the so-called hardness, or how could he have endured the privations of the long journey from his weary mother's side to this position of honor.

Cold, hard, dictatorial, superior? Well, there is a weak lean-on-somebody sort of woman, who will love any man who will feed and shelter her — she doesn't count. But when a clear-minded, business-like, clever woman, a wife for many years, loves her husband with the tenderest sentiment and devotion, I'm ready to wager something that it was *tenderness* and *devotion* in the husband that first aroused like sentiments in the wife.

Mrs. Barrett was shrewd, far-seeing, business-like — a devoted and watchful mother, but her love for her husband had still the freshness, the delicate sentiment of young wifehood. When she thought fit, she bullied him shamefully; when she thought fitter, she "guyed" him unmercifully. Think of that! And it was delightful to see the great, solemn-eyed personification of dignity smilingly accepting her buffets.

But, oh, to hear that wife tell of the sorrows and trials they had faced together, of their absurd makeshifts, of their small triumphs over poverty, of Lawrence's steady advance in his profession, of that beautiful day when they moved into a little house all by themselves, when he became, as he laughingly boasted, "a householder, not a forlorn, down-trodden boarder!"

Their family, besides themselves, then consisted of one little girl and Lawrence's beloved old mother, and he had a room to study in in peace, and the two women talked and planned endlessly about curtains and furniture, and — oh, well, about some more very small garments that would, God willing, be needed before a very great while. And one day Lawrence looked about his little table, and said: "It's too good, it can't last, it can't!" and the women kissed him and laughed at him; yet all the time he was right, it did not last. An awful bolt seemed to fall from the blue sky. It was one of those pitiful disasters that sometimes come upon the very old — particularly to those who have endured much, suffered much, as had the elder Mrs. Barrett in the past.

I wept as I heard the story of the devoted son's dry-eyed agony, of the awful fears his condition aroused in the minds of those close to him, and then suddenly she, the wife, had been stricken down, and her danger and that of the tiny babe had brought him to his old self again.

He worked on then for some months, grateful for the sparing of his dear ones, when quite suddenly and painlessly the stricken old mother passed from sleep to life everlasting. Then when Joseph was to be summoned — Joe who worshipped the mother's footprint in the dust — he was not to be found. He had fallen again into disgrace, had been discharged, had disappeared, no one knew whither.

"Oh, dear Father!" cried Mrs. Barrett, "what did not Lawrence suffer for Joe! knowing what his agony would be when he knew all — but we could do no more.

The funeral took place. White as marble, Lawrence sent us all home, and himself waited till the last clod of earth was piled upon the grave; then waited till the men had gone, waited to kneel and pray a moment before leaving the old mother there alone. And as he knelt he noted how nearly dark it was, and thought he must not linger long or the gates would be locked upon him. As he rose from his knees, he was startled to see, through the dusk, a tall form coming toward him. It would dodge behind a monument, and after a moment's pause would come a little nearer. Suddenly the drooping, lurching figure became familiar to him. With a groan he hid himself behind a tombstone and waited — waited until suspicion became certainty, and he knew that the bent, weary funeral guest was his brother, Joe!

"He held his peace until the wanderer found his way along the darkening path to that pathetic stretch of freshly broken earth, where, with an exceeding bitter cry, he flung his arms above his head and fell all his length along the grave that held the sweetest and the holiest thing God had ever given him, an honest, loving mother, and clutched the damp clods in his burning hands, and gasped out: 'Oh, mother! I have hungered and I have tramped with the curse upon me, too; I have hungered and tramped so far, so far, hoping just to be in time to see your dear face once more, and now they've shut you away from me, from the bad boy you never turned your patient eyes away from! Oh, mother! whatever can I do without you, all alone! all alone!'

"At that child-like cry from the broken man, prostrate on the grave, Lawrence Barrett's heart turned to water, and kneeling down he lifted to his breast the tear-blurred, drink-blemished face of his brother, and kissed him as his mother might have done. Thus they prayed together for the repose of the soul of their beloved, and then, with his arm about the wanderer, to steady his failing steps, Lawrence led him to his little home, and, as they entered, he turned and said: 'Joe, can't you take back those

words, "all alone," can't you?' and Joe nodded his head, and throwing his arms about his brother's neck, answered: 'Never alone, while my little brother Larry lives and forgives!'"

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVENTH

I play "Marie" to Oblige — Mr. Barrett's Remarkable Call — Did I Receive a Message from the Dying or the Dead?

FROM the time when, as a ballet-girl, I was called forward and given the part of *Marie* in "The Marble Heart," a play Mr. Barrett was starring in, to the then distant day of that really splendid combination with Mr. Edwin Booth, I never saw the former when he was not burning with excitement over some production he had in mind, if not yet in rehearsal. Even in his sleep he saw perfect pictures of scenery not yet painted, just as before "Ganalon" he used to dream of sharp lance and gay pennon moving in serried ranks, of long lines of nobles and gentlemen who wore the Cross of the Crusader.

His friends were among the highest of God's Aristocracy of Brains — 'twas odd that sculptors, artists, poets, thinkers should strike hands with so "cold" a man and call him friend!

I remember well the dismayed look that came upon his face when I was ordered from the ballet ranks to take the place of the lady — a hard, high-voiced soubrette, who was to have played *Marie,* had not a sore throat mercifully prevented her. But at my first "Thank you — I'd rather go — yonder —," pointing to the distant convent, his eyes widened, suddenly a sort of tremor came to his lips. He was at my side in an instant, telling me to indicate my convent as on the opposite side, so that my own attitude would be more picturesque to the audience. Between the acts he said to me: "Have you any opinion of *Marie,* Miss er — er?"

"My name's 'just Clara,'" I kindly interjected.

"Well," he smiled, "'just Clara,' have you formed any idea of this *Marie's* character?"

"Why," I answered, "to me she seems a perfect walking gratitude; in real life she would be rather dog-like, I'm afraid; but in the play she is just beautiful."

He looked solemnly at me, and then he said: "And *you* are just beautiful, too, for you are a little thinking actress. Now if you have the power of expressing what you think, do you know I am very honestly interested, 'just Clara,' in your share of to-night's work."

The play went well as a whole, and as *Marie* is one of the most tenderly pathetic creations conceivable, I sat and wept as I told her story; but imagine my amazement when, as Mr. Barrett bent over my hand, a great hot tear fell from his cheek upon it.

"Oh, my girl," he said, when the play was over, "don't let anything on God's footstool dishearten you. Work! work! you have such power, such delicacy of expression with it — you *are Marie*, the little stupidly religious, dog-like 'Marie the resigned,' that you have renamed for me 'Marie the grateful.'"

When I was leading woman he wished to do that play for a single night. Of course *Marco* belonged to me, but the big, handsome, cold-voiced second woman could well talk through *Marco*, while she would (artistically speaking) damn *Marie*. Mr. Barrett was very hungry-eyed, there was positive famine in them, as he mournfully said: "I would give a great deal to hear you tell *Marie's* story again — to see you and your little bundle and bandaged foot. Such a clever touch that — that bandaged foot, no other *Marie* dares do that; but you have turned your back on the 'grateful one'; you can't afford to do her again."

"Mr. Barrett," I asked, "do you wish me to play *Marie* now?"

"Do I wish it?" he echoed, "I wish it with all my heart, but I have no right to ask a sacrifice from you

even if it would benefit the whole performance, as well as give me a personal pleasure."

"If the manager does not object," I said, "I am quite willing to give up the leading part and play *Marie* again."

He held my hands, he fairly stammered for a moment, then he said: "You are an *artiste* and a brave and generous girl. I shall remember this action of yours, 'just Clara,' always."

The amazed manager, after some objection, having consented, I once more put on the rusty black gown, took my small bundle, and asked of the gay ladies from Paris my way to the convent, yonder — finding in the tears of the audience and the excellence of the general performance, full reward for playing second fiddle that evening.

In my early married days, when the great coffee-urn was still a menace to my composure and dignity, at a little home-dinner, when Mr. William Black, the famous writer of Scottish novels, honored me by his presence on my right, Mr. Barrett on my left, moved, no one knows by what freak of memory, lifted his glass, and, speaking low, said: "'Just Clara,' your health!"

I laughed a little, and was nodding back, when Mr. Black, who saw everything through those glasses of his, cried out: "Favoritism, favoritism! why, bless my heart, I drank your health ten minutes ago, and you never blushed a blush for me! And I am chief guest, and on the right hand of the hostess — explanations are now in order!"

And Mr. Barrett said that he would explain on their way to the club, whereupon Mr. Black wrinkled up his nose delightedly, and said he "scented a story" — "and, oh," he cried, "it's the sweetest scent in the world, the most fascinating trail to follow!"

But I was thankful that he did not hunt down his quarry then and there, for he could be as mischievous as a squirrel and as persistent as any *enfant terrible*, if he thought you were depriving him of a story.

Though tears creep into my eyes at the same moment,

yet must I laugh whenever I think of Mr. Barrett's last "call" upon me. We were unknowingly stopping in the same hotel. On the way to the dining-room for a bit of lunch, Mr. Harriott and Mr. Barrett met, exchanged greetings, and when the latter found I was not going to luncheon, and was moreover suffering from a most severe attack of neuralgia, he asked if he could not call upon me for a few moments.

Mr. Harriott looked doubtful, and while he hesitated, Mr. Barrett hastily added: "Of course I shall merely say 'How do you do,' and express my sympathy, since I know something about neuralgia myself — that's all."

Upon which they turned back, and Mr. Harriott ushered the unexpected, the spick-and-span caller into my presence, with the reassuring word: "Mr. Barrett is sparing a moment or two of his time, Clara, to express his sympathy for you."

When a woman knows she is an "object," words of welcome for the unexpected visitor are apt to come haltingly from the tongue, and that I was an "object" no one can deny. A loose, pink dressing-gown was bad, a knit white shawl huddled about the shoulders was worse, but, oh, worst of all, my hair was all scrambled up to the top of my head (hair was dressed low then), and a broad handkerchief bandage concealed from the eye, but not from the nose, the presence of a remedial poultice of flour and brandy.

Truly it is such acts as this that brings many a well-meaning but apparently demented husband into the divorce court. Now any friend, relative, or servant would have bravely but politely prevaricated to the last gasp rather than have admitted a caller to me in that state, but husbands have no discretion, husbands have no — well, that's too large a contract, so I'll keep to that call.

I was aghast for a moment, but the warm pressure of Mr. Barrett's hand, his brightening eye gave me such an impression of sincerity in his pleased greeting that I forgot I was an "object," and asked him to sit down

for a chat, as eagerly as though I had had all my war-paint on.

We were soon exchanging memories of the past, and Mr. Harriott, having a business engagement ahead, excused himself and withdrew. Mr. Barrett, calling after him: "I'll join you in a moment," resumed his conversation. There still stood on the table a pot of tea and a plate holding two pieces of toast. They had been meant for my lunch, but neuralgia had the call, and lunch had been ignored; so, as we talked on and on, presently Mr. Barrett, seeing my bandage sliding down over my eyes, rose, and, without pausing in his rapid description of a certain picture he had seen abroad in its creator's studio, he passed behind me, tightened the knot of the handkerchief, put the sofa-pillow behind my head, a stool under my feet, and resumed his seat.

Then I talked and talked, and grew excited, then thirsty. I drew the tray nearer and poured out a cup of tea.

"Give me some," said Mr. Barrett, who was now telling me about a sitting of Parliament in London.

"Let me order some that's fresh," I replied.

"No, no!" he cried, impatiently, "that will be such an interruption — no, no!"

I gave him then a cup of cold tea. Presently I broke off a bit of the stiff and repellant toast, with its chilled, pale gleam of butter, and nibbled it. His hand went forth and broke off a bit also. We were on a new poem then, and Mr. Barrett seemed thrilling to his finger-tips with the delight of it. He repeated lines; I questioned his reading; we experimented, placing emphasis first on this word, then on that. We generally agreed, but we came an awful cropper over Gladstone.

How fiercely we clashed over the grand old man those who knew Mr. Barrett will guess from the fact that during the fray he excitedly undid two buttons of his tight frock-coat. The ends of his white silk muffler now hung down his back, fluttering when he moved like a small

pair of white wings. I have a recollection, too, of his rising, and, apparently unconscious of his act, lighting the gas, while he passionately demanded of me the reason why Dickens could not create a real woman.

At last we came up hard and fast against *Hamlet*. The air was thick with stories. Part of the time we talked together in our eagerness. Mr. Barrett's coat was quite unbuttoned; the curl on his wide brow had grown as frizzly as any common curl might grow. Two round, red spots spread over his high cheek-bones, his eyes were hungrily glowing; he had just taken a long breath and made a start on an audience with the Pope, when Mr. Harriott entered and said: "I beg your pardon, Mr. Barrett, there's a man outside who is very anxiously inquiring for you."

"For me?" exclaimed Mr. Barrett, with astonishment, "that's rather impertinent, it seems to me!"

Suddenly he noticed the gas-light. He started violently, he pulled out his watch, then sprang to his feet, crying: "Good God! Harriott, that's my dresser looking for me — I ought to be in my dressing-room. What will Mr. Booth think has become of me, and what, in heaven's name, do you think of me?"

He hastily buttoned himself into rigidity, rescued the flying ends of his muffler, and holding my hands for a moment, he laughed: "You are not only 'just Clara,' but you are the only Clara that would make me so utterly forgetful of all rules of etiquette. Forgive, and good-by!" and he made an astonishingly hasty exit.

That "call," that lasted from one till seven, with the accompanying picture of the stately Lawrence Barrett drinking cold tea and eating stiff cold toast, while he talked brilliantly of all things under heaven, is one of my quaintest memories.

One loves to think of those years of his close relations with Mr. Booth. Artistically, the combination was an ideal one; commercially, it was a most successful one; while it certainly brought out qualities of gentleness

and devotion in Mr. Barrett that the public had not accredited him with.

The position of manager and co-star was a difficult one, and only Barrett's loving comprehension of Booth's peculiarities, as well as his greatness, made that position tenable. Mr. Booth loathed business details; he was sorrowful and weary; he had tasted all the sweets the world had to offer, but only their under tang of bitterness was left upon his lips. He had grown coldly indifferent to the call of the public, but Mr. Barrett believed that under this ash of lassitude there still glowed the clear fire of genius, and when they went forth to try their great experiment, Mr. Booth found himself respected, honored, guarded as any woman might have been. He was asked no questions about scene or scenery, about play or percentage — his privacy and peace were ever of the first consideration. Mr. Barrett was his agent, manager, stage-manager, friend, co-worker, and dramatic guardian angel — all he asked of him in return was to act.

And how splendidly Mr. Booth responded the public can well remember. As he said laughingly to a friend, at the end of the first season: "Good work, eh? well, why should I not do good work, after all Barrett has done for me. Why, I never knew what c-o-m-f-o-r-t spelled before. I arrive — someone says: 'Here's your room, Mr. Booth.' I go in and smoke. At night, someone says: 'Here's your dressing-room, sir,' and I go in and dress, yes, and smoke, and then act. That's all, absolutely all that I have to do, except to put out my hand and take my surprisingly big share of the receipts now and then. Good work, eh? well, I'll give him the best that's in me, he deserves it."

And in the beautiful friendship that grew up between the melancholy, gentle Booth and the nervously energetic Barrett I believe each gave to the other the best that was in him.

Before leaving the Barretts I should like to mention

an odd happening connected with Joe and my visit to New Orleans, where the theatre was under the management of Lawrence Barrett and Mr. Rogers. The company had taken for me one of those quick likings peculiar to our people; principally, I think, because being a temporary star (by the grace of Mr. Daly's will) they had expected me to be haughtily dictatorial, instead of shy to the point of misery, and because of their mistake they treated me like a long-sought sister, instead of the stranger I was.

They publicly presented me with a gift on my last night, and almost in a body saw my mother and myself off on our Sunday night start for home. Everyone had left the car but big, hearty Joe Barrett — he still clung silently to my hands, though my mother begged him to go before he met with an injury. The train was out of the depot — the speed increasing rapidly, before he dropped off, safely landing just beneath a light, high above his head. His hat was off, his empty hand held out toward me, and in that light his face was as the face of the sorrowful dead. It chilled me, all my high spirits flattened down suddenly; I turned, and said: "Did *you* see, mother?" and she answered: "It was the light, and his unhappiness, that made him look so like a — so sad," so I knew she had seen him as I had.

Our journey was saddened by an accident, and when the train backed to take up the creature it had crushed, not knowing what had happened, by chance I glanced down from the window, full into the face of the victim as they bore him past. He had been a large, broad-shouldered man, and the still, white face was so like Barrett's that I almost fainted. Everyone in the car seemed to feel some measure of culpability for the mishap; and at every unusual jolt or jar we looked with frightened eyes from the windows, dreading lest another stretcher might be borne into view. At last we were at home, and in work I regained my usual spirits.

A few weeks, three or four, had passed. One morn-

ing I awakened myself from a dreamless sleep by my own singing. I faced the blank wall. I smiled sleepily at the absurdity of the thing, then I grew more awake, and as I sang on, I said to myself: "What is it — why, what can it be, that I am singing?"

There were no words to this mournful, heart-breaking air, that ended with a wail, long and weird.

"Mother," I called, the door being open between our rooms, "Mother, did you hear me singing just now?"

"Well, yes," she replied, "since I am not deaf, I heard you very plainly."

"Oh," I cried, "can you tell me what it was I sang?"

My mother raised her head and looked in at me surprisedly: "Why, what is the matter with you, child — aren't you awake, that you don't know what you are doing? You were singing 'the lament' Joe Barrett sang in the French cemetery."

"Oh!" I cried, in late-coming recognition, "you are right." I scrambled up, and thrusting back my hair from my face, started to sing it again, and lo! not a note could I catch. Again and again I tried; I shut my eyes and strove to recall that wail — no use. Then, remembering what a memory my mother had for *airs* heard but once or twice, I called: "Dear, can't you start 'the lament' for me, I have lost it entirely?"

She opened her lips, paused, looked surprised, then said, positively: "I might never have heard it, I can't get either its beginning or ending."

I sprang from the bed, and in bare, unslippered feet, ran to the piano in the front room — no use; I never again heard, waking or sleeping, another note of "the lament."

Mother called out presently: "Do you know what time it is? Go back and finish your sleep, it's not quite six o'clock."

As I obediently returned to my room, I said, in a troubled voice: "What do you suppose it means, mother?" and as she snuggled her head back upon her pillow,

she laughingly answered: "Oh, I suppose it's a sign you are going to hear from Joe Barrett soon. If you do, I hope it won't be anything bad, poor fellow!" for mother liked the "big Irish boy," as she called him.

I fell asleep again, but was up and ready at nine for our rather-foreign breakfast of coffee, rolls, and salad. Now in our partnership mother was mistress of the house, and I, doing the outside work, being the wage-winner, was the *man* of the house, and as such had the master's inalienable right to the morning paper with my coffee. That the mistress occasionally peeped at the headlines before the *master* rose was a fact judiciously ignored by both, so long as the paper was ever found neatly folded beside the waiting coffee-cup. Imagine then my surprise when, coming into the room, I found my mother sitting at table with the badge of authority in her own hands, and my cup standing shorn of all its dignity. She avoided my eye, and hastily pouring coffee, said: "Drink it while it's hot, dear, and — and I'll just glance at the paper a moment."

I sat back and stared, and I was just beginning to laugh at our small comedy when I discovered that mother, she of the rock-steady nerves, was trembling. Without looking up, she said again: "Drink your coffee — I'll give you the paper presently."

I sipped a little and watched. She was not reading a line. I put down the cup. "Mother," said I, "is there anything in that paper that will interest me?"

She looked up hastily: "Drink your coffee, and I'll ——"

"Is there?" I broke in.

Tears rose in her eyes. "Y-y-yes," she stammered, "there is something here that will interest — rather that will grieve you, but if you would please take your coffee!"

I caught up the cup and emptied it at a draught, then held out my hand. Mother gave me the paper and left the room; as her first sob reached my ear, I read: "Sud-

den death of the actor, Joseph Barrett." I sat staring stupidly, and before I saw another word there came to my ears the shivering of leaves, and a grave voice, saying: "It is a message from the dying or — the dead — believe that."

"What," I asked, dully, "what is a message?" and then the blood chilled at my heart as I recalled "the lament," Joe had said: "It is a message from the dying — or the dead."

After rehearsal, Mr. Daly wished to see me in his bit of a staircase-office in front of the house. He desired help in deciding about several scenes he meant to have built from old engravings. Suddenly he came to a standstill. "What's the matter with you?" he cried; "where are your splendid spirits? you have been absent and heavy all morning — what's the matter?"

"Oh, nothing much," I began, when he angrily interrupted: "For heaven's sake, spare me that senseless answer. If you won't tell me, say so. Refuse me your confidence, if you choose, but don't treat me as though I were a fool by saying *nothing*, when you look as if you'd seen a ghost!"

"Oh, don't!" I cried, and astonished my irate manager by bursting into tears. He instantly became gentle, and forcing a thimbleful of *Chartreuse* (which I loath) upon me, he once more asked what was the matter.

And then I told him of the dying emigrant — of Joe's feeling for me — of the singing of "the lament," and at Joe's words: "It's a message from the dying, or the dead."

Mr. Daly's fingers trembled like aspen leaves, his eyes dilated to perfect blackness, and almost he whispered the words: "Well, child — well?"

I told of the song, begun in sleep, continued in wakefulness to its wailing end, and then lost — utterly lost! And leaning his pale face eagerly toward me, Mr. Daly exclaimed: "He proved his words, good God! don't you see that — that air was his message to you? a mes-

sage from the dying or the dead!" his fingers nervously sought the little amulet he wore.

"But," I objected, "he had been dead many hours before the song came to me?"

When, with the utmost conviction, he instantly answered: "Think how far you were asunder — what a distance he had to come to you!"

Being a very practical young person, a smile was rising to my lips, but a glance into his earnest eyes, that had become strange and mystic, checked it.

"I shall tell Father D—y of this," he said, half to himself, then, looking at me, he added: "The man loved you greatly, whatever he may have been, for you have received his message — whether it came from the man dying or the man dead. Go home, child; never mind about the scenes to-day — go home!"

And with that weird idea firmly fixed in his mind, he dismissed me.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHTH

I accept an Engagement with Mr. Macaulay for Cincinnati as Leading Lady—My Adieus to Cleveland—Mr. Ellsler Presents Me with a Watch.

AFTER years of weary waiting, years of patient work, I had reached the position of juvenile leads *de jure,* but of general hack *de facto,* and then, lacking as my character was in the element of "push," even *I* could see plainly that I was throwing away myself and my chances in life by remaining in a position where I faced the sign of "No thoroughfare."

That Mrs. Ellsler would retain the leading business while her husband retained a theatre was certain. I knew positively that some of Cleveland's leading business men, sturdy supporters of the theatre, finding that their mildly expressed dissatisfaction with the make-up of the company was ignored, had written and plainly asked for a change, just as Mr. Ellsler, every two years, changed the comedian, leading man, etc., etc. They declared that his business would double in consequence; and this was submitted with the kindliest intentions and no wish to wound anyone, etc., and they were, with great respect — various business men.

At all events, when the letter had produced embarrassed discomfort in one quarter and fierce anger in another, it became inactive. I rightly judged that the "No thoroughfare" sign was permanent — there was no further advancement possible in that theatre; therefore I rejoiced greatly when I had an engagement offered me, even though, for reasons touching the reputation of the manager who wrote, I refused it — still an offer of leading business heartened me, and I felt gratefully sure some

star had spoken a kind word in my behalf. There was so much hanging upon that possible engagement, too; it meant more than advancement professionally, more than gratified ambition. Never yet had I been able to go beyond the taking care of myself and lending a helping hand in sickness to my mother; while, to my unsleeping distress, my bitter mortification, she had still to work. We were still apart, save for my regular weekly visit, and such a small increase in salary would have made it possible for us to live together, after a manner, in a very small way, but we would rather have been half alive and together than have thrilled with superabundant vitality while separated.

As my services had never seemed to be regarded seriously by anyone but the star of the especial occasion, I was not utterly taken aback when I found my intention of stepping bravely out into the big world received with surprise and cold disapproval. Really, I was almost convinced that I had still the very a-b-abs of my business yet to learn, that I was rash and headstrong and all puffed up with strange, unseemly vanity; but just as I was sinking back to that "old-slipper" state of mind desired, a letter came from the well-known, thoroughly established actor-manager, Mr. Barney Macaulay, who offered me the leading business at Wood's Museum, Cincinnati, O.

The salary was very small, but I understood perfectly that any manager would offer as small a salary to any actress whose *first* season it was as leading woman.

Oh, my! oh, my! but there followed a period of scant sunshine, of hot argument, of cold and cautious advice, of terrifying hints of lacking qualities. Want of dignity, of power, of authority! The managerial forces were winning all along the line of argument, when, like many another combatant who faces annihilation, I took a desperate chance; I called up every dissatisfied speech of my absent mother, every complaint, regret, reproach, every word of disappointment, of vexation, of urging,

of goading, of stern command, and arming these words with parental authority I mounted them upon a mother's fierce wrath, and thus, as cavalry, recklessly hurled them at full charge upon the enemy's line. I had no infantry of proof to support my cavalry's move, it was sheer desperation; but Fortune is a fickle jade, she sprang suddenly to my side. The managerial lines broke before the mother's charge, and before he had them reformed I had written Mr. Macaulay that I was ready to consider to accept the offered engagement, if, etc., etc., and then put on my hat and jacket and went forth and cleverly showed, first the offered engagement to arouse my victimized parent's hopes, then descanted upon the opposition offered to my acceptance of it, and when *she* was warmed with indignation I confessed to using her as my principal weapon — even admitted making up some speeches, and being hot and pleased, indignant and proud, she forgave me, and I bit my lips hard to keep silence about a great hope that she might possibly go with me to that new engagement; but, to spare her a possible disappointment, I held my peace.

Later, when everything was seemingly settled and only the contract left to sign, came the amazing suggestion from Mr. Macaulay, that, because of my youth, I would undoubtedly be perfectly willing to let him reserve a few heavy *parts* for his wife's acting. It is quite needless for me to explain that the few *parts* to be reserved were the choicest of the legitimate drama. And then an amusing thing came to pass. I, who was so lacking in self-confidence, so backward and retiring, so easily cast down by a look of disapprobation, suddenly developed (on paper) an ability to stand up for my rights that was startling. By return mail I informed Mr. Macaulay that my youth did not affect me in the manner he anticipated; that I was not willing to resign all those important parts to another — no matter whose wife that other happened to be.

A long, argumentative, soothing sort of letter came back to me, ending with the positive conviction that I

would yield two parts to his wife — great pets of hers they were, too, and one of them being *Lady Macbeth,* I would of course be grateful to have it taken off my hands, while *Julia,* in "The Hunchback," had really come to be considered, in Cincinnati, as Miss Johnson's special property — Miss Rachael Johnson being the stage name of Mrs. Macaulay.

Had he asked two *parts* in the first place I would have granted them, but now my blood was up (on paper, mind you), and with swift decision I boldly threw the engagement up, declaring I would be the leading woman or nothing. For, you see, I had been in the frying-pan of one family theatre all my dramatic life, and I was not willing to throw myself at once into the fire of another one.

The next letter contained a great surprise: a couple of signed contracts and a pleasant request for me too to sign both and return one immediately. Then the writer quite gently regretted my inability to grant his request, but closed by expressing his respect for my firmness in demanding my rights; and straightway I signed my first contract; went out and mailed one copy, and when I returned I had made up my mind to take the great risk — I had decided that my mother should never again receive commands from anyone. That my shoulders were strong enough to bear the welcome burden, and so we would face the new life and its possible sufferings together — *together,* that was the main thing.

As I stood before the glass, smoothing my hair, I gravely bowed to my reflection, and said: "Accept my congratulations and best wishes, 'Wood's leading lady,'" and then fell upon the bed and sobbed, as foolish nerve-strained women will; because, you see, the way had been so long and sometimes so hard, dear Lord! so hard, but by His mercy I had won one goal — I was a leading woman!

And then began my good-by to the city that I loved. I had lived in so many of its streets; I had attended so

many of its schools, and still more of its churches. There was the great lake, too. I had sailed on it, had been wrecked on it, but against that I set the memory of those days when, in night-gown bath-dress, I reveled in its blue waters on Fourth of July family picnics.

One church — old Bethel on Water Street — I hated, because the Sunday-school superintendent had been a hypocrite, and we knew it, and because in every one of its library books the good child died at the end, which was very discouraging to youthful minds.

Another church, on Prospect Street, I loved, because that Sunday-school teacher had been so gentle and smiling and had worn such pretty pink flowers in her bonnet.

Then there was the fountain in the square. I laughed as I said good-by to that, recalling the morning when, because of a bad throat, I had unobservedly, as I supposed, swallowed a powder (homœopathic), and next moment heard hurrying footsteps behind me and felt a heavy hand on my shoulder, while a rough voice cried: "Where's the paper? what did you do it for? what's your name? say, answer up, now, before it gets hold of you — what's your name?"

Frightened and bewildered, 'twas with difficulty I convinced the suspicious policeman that I was not attempting suicide by poison, but was trying to cure a sore throat. A theatre bill-board was in fair view, and my part in the *play*, which I luckily held rolled in my hand, induced him to let me go to rehearsal instead of the station-house; and while the policeman dispersed the crowd his own error had gathered, I resolved, as I flew toward the theatre, to take no more powders in public parks — no matter how empty they might seem to be.

And then there was the *jail*, and as I nodded a good-by at its blackened walls I saw again that sunny morning when, in greatest haste, I passed that way and observed, coming toward me, three men walking very closely, who showed no intention of making way for me — which made me look at them surprisedly. And then the aston-

ishing beauty of the tall, white-clothed central figure brought me to a halt. His ruddy features were as severely perfect as those stamped on an ancient coin. His glittering hair and mustache were of that pale and precious gold most often seen crowning a baby's head. His figure was tall, broad-shouldered, small-waisted, and his hands, good God! I whispered, and stopped there, for he wore the hand-cuffs, and on either side of him a strong and grimy hand gripped his arm. That was why they made no room for me; and as I swerved swiftly out into the middle of the street to pass them by, there came a glitter of bold blue eyes, a flash of white teeth, and a deep voice cried back to me: "I'm awfully sorry; I beg your pardon," and then they wheeled inside the iron gates, and five minutes later I knew the physically splendid creature I had seen was that Dr. Hughes who had just been taken for the murder of his victim (of a mock marriage), poor little sixteen-year-old Tamsie Parsons — she of the curly head, but steel-firm mouth, who loved passionately this God-like devil, yet had the moral courage to resist him to the death.

And then the post-office was quite full of memories. One made my brow grow moist, even after years had passed since the damp autumn day when, as a child, I had let fall upon the stone floor a good large bottle of benzine. The crushed thing, wrapped nicely in blue paper, lay there, innocent to behold, while its escaping volatile contents got in some really fine work. First, two ladies held their noses, then a fierce old be-whiskered man looked about suspiciously, working his offended member just as a dog would. Then two men hurrying in opposite directions, but with their eyes turned up inquiringly toward the gas-fixture overhead, collided violently, and instead of apologizing, each abused the other as a blundering idiot, and wrinkling up their noses disgustedly, unlocked their boxes, and still grumbling went their ways, one declaring that the gas being wasted there was sufficient to illuminate the whole building. Then

doors began to open violently, and pale men in office coats of alpaca darted out and ran about, frantically trying to turn off gas that was not turned on; and there I stood, shivering over the innocent blue package, very wet by that time, with my fear of a whipping for breaking the bottle losing itself in the greater terror of some swift public expiation of my fault. The unknown is always terrifying, and I strove in vain to imagine what the punishment would be for creating evil odors in a public building that brought postal clerks from their work in pursuit of them. But the sight of a policeman advancing toward the delivery window suddenly set me in motion, and with a bound I was out of the door and running like mad for a (then) Kinsman Street car. I wonder yet if that gas leak was ever properly located.

Another day I had been sent for an advertised letter, and as several grown-ups were ahead of me at the little window, I withdrew to lean against the wall and rest a bit while waiting, for I had walked far and was very tired. And then a very white-haired, white-whiskered, white-tied old gentleman entered one of the many doors and looked nervously about him; when, seeing me, he brightened up, and at once began to beckon me toward him. Always respectfully obedient to the old, I at once approached the pink and white chipper old man, who nodded, smiled, and patting my head, asked, eagerly: "Er — er, do you — can you get letters from the office-window yonder?"

His restless eyes wandered all over the place. "Oh, yes, sir," I answered, "I often get them for my mother, and for other people, too!"

"Quite right, yes, yes, quite right, quite right!" responded the old gentleman, then added, reflectively: "Yes, she's a female, but females receive letters, though they don't vote, yes, yes! Well, my child, I want you to help me in a great and good work. You know people are taught from their earliest infancy the necessity of minding their P's and Q's, and that they don't do it! Now you and I

will mind the P's and Q's of this great city, won't we, my dear? So, you just go to the window there and get all the letters there are for Parker, Purley, Prentiss, and Porter, and I'll come after you and get all the letters for Pixley, Pratt, Prince, and Pettigrew, and to-morrow, my dear, we'll come down and get all the Q's — the Quigley, Quinn, and Quiller crowd — and — and we'll take all the letters over to the fountain and throw them in the basin of water, and if they float we'll pitch bricks at 'em! Now, now's your time, go ahead, and get all the P's you can — it's a great scheme, great!" and then he stopped, for an almost breathless voice called out: "Here he is, Hank! confound him!" And as two men hurried toward my chipper old reformer, one said, reproachfully: "Now, look-a-here, Mr. Peiffer, if you don't keep your word no better nor this, Hank and me'll have to keep hold of you on your walks, and you won't like that!"

"No," meekly murmured the old man, "I — er — I won't like that, I'm sure."

Then Hank turned to me and asked, suspiciously: "Has he been filling you full of P's and Q's?"

I nodded. "Then," said the other man, "we'd better get him back quick, that's the way he begins. Come on, now, Mr. Peiffer, come on!" and between them they led away the poor white-haired old madman, who looked back as he passed me, and whispered: "Pitch 'em in the fountain, I'll get the Q's to-morrow!"

There, too, was the old, old grave-yard that the city had crept up to, cautiously at first, then finding them quite harmless — the quiet dead — had stretched out brick and mortar arms and circled it about. A network of streets had tangled about it, and turbulent life dashed against its very gates on the outside, but inside there was a great green silence.

How well I knew the quiet place — the far, damp corner where, in lifting bodies for removal to a new cemetery, one had been found petrified; the giant sycamore-tree that guarded the grave of a mighty Indian chief, the lonely

hemlock blackened nook where a grave had been cruelly robbed, the most expensive tomb, the most beautiful tomb, the oldest tomb, I knew them all. But the special attraction for me was a plain white headstone that happened to bear my own name. Whenever my mother boxed my ears, or was too hasty in her judgment to be quite just, I went over to my silent city and sat down and looked at the tombstone, and thought if it were really mine how sorry my mother would feel for what she had done. And when I had, in imagination, seen her tears and remorse, I would begin to feel sorry for her and to think she was punished enough, especially if it was rather late, and the shadows of tombstones and trees all fell long upon the sunny walks, all pointing like warning black fingers toward the gate. Then, indeed, I was apt to forgive my mother and flee to her — and supper.

And so, up and down, smiling and sighing, I went, taking *congé* of the city that had been home to me all my life, save just two years. I even paused at the little old cottage whose gate was the only one I had ever swung on, and I had hated the swinging, but I was six and was passionately enamoured of a small person named Johnnie, who lived there and who wore blue aprons; so I swung on the gate with him and to please him, and then, being like most of his sex, fickle of fancy, he deserted me for a new red dress worn by another. And when he spilled milk on it (his mother sold milk) and spoiled its glory, she scratched his face, and he wanted to return to me; but my love was dead, so dead I wouldn't even accept sips of milk out of the little pails he had to carry around to customers. And, so cruel is life, there I stood and laughed as I took leave of the small gate.

At last all was done, my trunks were gone, I sat in my empty room waiting for the carriage. I had to make my journey quite alone, since my mother was to join me only when I had found a place to settle in. I was very sad. Mr. Ellsler was ill, for the first time since I had known him, and I had been over to his home, three

or four blocks away, and bade good-by to Mrs. Ellsler and gentle little Annie — the other children were out. And finding I had no fear of contagion from a bad throat, she showed me into Mr. Ellsler's room. I was shocked to see him so wasted and so weak, and not being used to sickness I was frightened about him. Judge, then, my amazement, when, hearing a knock on my door and calling, "Come in," instead of a bell-boy, there entered, pale and almost staggering, Mr. Ellsler. A rim of red above his white muffler betrayed the bandaged throat, and his poor voice was but a husky whisper.

"I could not help it," he said; "you were placed under my care once by your mother. You were a child then, and though you are pleased to consider yourself a woman now, I could not bear to think of your leaving the city, at this saddest hour of the day, to begin a lonely journey, without some old friend being by for a parting God-speed."

I was inexpressibly grateful, even through all my fright at his rashness; but he had yet another surprise for me. He said: "I wanted, too, Clara, to make you a little present, to give you a keepsake that would last long and would remind you daily of — of — er the years you have passed in my theatre."

He drew a small box from his pocket. "A good girl and a good actress," he said, "needs and ought to own a —" he touched a spring, the box flew open — "a good watch," he finished.

I gave a cry, I could not realize it was for me — I *could* not! I clasped my hands in admiration instead of taking it, so, with his thin, sick man's fingers, he took it from its case and dropped it in my lap. I caught it then, and "Oh!" and again "Oh!" was all that I could cry, while I pressed it to my cheek and gloated over it.

Literally, I could not speak, such an agony of delight in its beauty, of pride in its possession, of satisfaction in a need supplied, of gratitude tremendous and surprise immeasurable were more than I could find words for.

If you are inclined to think this exaggeration, remember how poor I was — had always been; remember, too, there were no cheap watches then; this was of the best make and had a chain attached as well; then think how great was my need of it for the theatre, day and night, and for traveling. By my utter inability to earn such a thing measure my joyful surprise at receiving it, a gift.

It was one of the red-letter days of my life, the day I owned a watch. My thanks must have been sadly jumbled and broken, but my pride and pleasure made Mr. Ellsler laugh, and then the carriage was there, and laughter stilled into a silent, close hand-clasp. As I opened the door of the dusty old hack, I glanced up and saw the first star prick brightly through the evening sky. Then the hoarse voice said, "God bless you!" and I had left my first manager.

As I stepped out of the carriage at the depot, glancing up again I saw the sky sown thick with stars, like a field of heavenly daisies. I smiled a little at the thought, then suddenly *drew my watch* to see the time, and hurried to my train. Thus grateful for a kindly send-off, made happy by a gift, I turned my back upon the old, safe life and brightly, hopefully faced the new. For I was young, and therefore confident; and it is surely for the old world's need that God has made youth so.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINTH

My first Humiliating Experience in Cincinnati is Followed by a Successful Appearance—I Make the Acquaintance of the Enthusiastic Navoni.

IT is a deep humiliation to relate my first experience in Cincinnati, but for reasons I set it down.

A friend of mine, who hailed from Cincinnati and who wished to serve me, had said: "One thing I think I can do for you, friend Clara, I can save you the weariness and annoyance of a long search in a strange city for board. My wife and I were never so comfortable in our lives before as we were at the house of a Mrs. Scott. She is a gentlewoman, therefore she never pries, never gossips, never 'just runs in a moment,' when you want to study a 'part.' Her charges are reasonable, the table a little close, perhaps, but the cooking perfect. You and your mother would suit her demands as to regularity of habits, quiet conduct, etc., completely, and going there so early in September you will stand a good chance of securing a room. Try for 'ours'—it was so sunny and bright." And I, delighted at such a prospect, looked upon my letter of introduction as a very valuable document—a sort of character from my last place, and early on Monday morning went forth from my temporarily sheltering hotel to find Mrs. Scott and beg her to take me in on the word of her boarders of a year ago.

I found the house easily, but, modest as was its exterior, its rich interior sent my heart down rapidly—it was going to be away beyond my salary I decided. Yet after a, to me, most bewildering interview, I found myself inspecting the big sunny room, and shrinking at the thought of my rough trunks coming in contact with

such a handsome carpet. Mrs. Scott had remarked, casually, that she had put her earnings back on the house, as a pure matter of business, and I was radiant when she named her price for the room, and hastily engaging it, I started out at once to order my trunks taken there and to telegraph mother to come.

As I descended the steps I could not help humming a little tune. A policeman strolled across the street toward me, and I had a hazy notion that he had been there when I went in. As I reached the pavement he stepped up, and holding out to me a handkerchief, palpably his own, asked, while looking at me closely, if it was mine.

I was indignant, and I answered, sharply: "It is not mine — as you very well know!"

He laughed rather sheepishly, and said: "Well, you are not stupid, if you are innocent," then asked: "Are you a stranger here?"

I turned back toward the house I had just left, then paused as I said, angrily: "I have a mind to go back and ask Mrs. Scott to come out with me to protect me from the impertinence of the police!"

"Who?" he asked, with wide-open, wondering eyes, "you will go back to who?"

"To Mrs. Scott," I snapped.

"Why," said he, "there's no Mrs. Scott there."

"No?" I questioned satirically. "No? Well, as I have just engaged board from Mrs. Scott, I venture to differ with you."

"Good Lord, Miss," the man said, "Mrs. William Scott's been dead these nine months or more. That's no place for honest people now. Why — why, we're watchin' the house this moment, hoping to catch that woman's jail-bird son, who has broken jail in Louisville — don't look so white, Miss!"

"But — but," I whispered, "I — I was sent here by a friend — I — I have engaged a room there! Oh, what shall I do?"

"That's all right, Miss," reassuringly answered the policeman, "I'll give up the room for you. You ain't the only one that has come here expecting to find Mrs. Scott in the house. You don't need to go back to the door;" and the theatre being in full view, in an agony of humiliation and terror, I flung myself into its friendly, just-opened office, where Mr. Macaulay presently found me shaking like a leaf and almost unable to make plain my experience.

He was furious, and finding my name was mentioned in the letter of introduction to Mrs. Scott, and that "Mrs. Scott" had retained it, he called the policeman and together they went to the house and demanded the letter back. It was given up, but most unwillingly, as the woman, with the superstition of all gambling people, looked upon it as a luck-breeder, a mascot; and an hour later, by Mr. Macaulay's aid, I had found two wee rooms, whose carpets would welcome my trunks as hiders of holes — rooms that were dull, even dingy, but had nevertheless securely sheltered honest poverty for long years past, and could do as much for years to come.

I mention this unpleasant incident simply to show how utterly unexpected are some of the pitfalls that make dangerous the pathway of honest girlhood. To show, too, that utter ignorance of evil is in itself a danger. The interview that bewildered me would have been, for instance, a danger signal to my mother, who would, too, having seen how the richness of furniture contradicted outside shabbiness, have had her suspicions aroused. I noted that fact, but not knowing of gambling being unlawful and secretly carried on, my observation was of no service to me, as it suggested nothing. Ignorance of the existence of evil may sometimes become the active foe of innocence.

No one learned of the unpleasant experience, so I was spared disagreeable comment; and, sending for my mother to join me, I devoted myself to preparations of my opening night.

The meeting with strangers, which I had greatly dreaded, passed off so easily, even so pleasantly, as to surprise me. Everyone offered a kind word of greeting, and all the women expressed their sympathy because I had to open in so poorly dressed a part. That troubled *me* very little, however.

The character was that of a country girl (*Cicely*) in some old comedy, whose name I have forgotten. She wore just one gown — a black and white print, as she was in mourning for her old, farmer father. A rustic wench, a milk-maid come up to "Lun'un-town," she had one speech that was a trial for any woman to have to speak. It was not as brutally expressed as are many of the speeches given to rustics in the old English comedies — but it was the *double-entendre* that made it coarse.

Some of the ladies were speaking with me of the matter, and the "old woman" suggested that I just mumble the words. I said I could not well do that, as it was a part of the principal scene of the play.

"Well," declared another, "I should hang my head and let the house see that I was ashamed of the speech."

I said nothing, but I thought that would be a most inartistic breaking away from the part of the rustic *Cicely*, and a dragging in of scandalized Miss Morris.

The girl was supposed to make the speech through blundering ignorance, she alone not seeing its significance; and to my idea there was but one way to deliver it, and that certainly was not with a hanging head and shamefaced manner, thus showing perfect, if disapproving, knowledge of its double meaning.

When the opening night came a pleasant little thing happened to me. As I entered with straw hat tied under chin and bundle in hand, I received a modest little reception, what would about equal the slight raising of a hat in passing a woman in a corridor; but the moment I had spoken the first insignificant speech the house gave me as hearty a greeting as any leading woman could wish for.

I was startled and much confused for a few moments, but very pleased and grateful withal, yet when I came off, Mr. Macaulay's pleasure seemed twice as great as mine, and as I laughingly told him so, he said: "Well, now I'm going to make a confession. Your letters gave me an impression of — of — well, you are entirely unlike your letters — you are smaller, and you look even younger than you really are. There isn't the very faintest suggestion of the actress in your manner, and — and — to be honest, I was a bit frightened over the engagement I had made. Then your having to open in this insignificant part was against you. But they are no fools out *there,* my girl. They have found you out already. Your eyes and voice alone won that welcome, and I'd not be afraid to wager something now that the last curtain falls to-night upon a new favorite."

I was greatly pleased, but those broad lines were still hanging over me, still disturbing me.

At last the scene arrived. I gave the inquiring speech, with its wretched double meaning, clearly and plainly, looking squarely and honestly into the eyes of the person I addressed — the result was described as follows by a morning paper:

"That one speech proved the newcomer an actress of superior quality. Clearly and simply given, the great guffaw that instantly responded to the *double-entendre* had scarcely risen, when the girl's perfect honesty, her wide-eyed innocence, so impressed the audience that applause broke from every part of the house. It was the most dramatic moment of the evening, for that outburst was not merely approbation for the actress, it was homage to the woman."

So it came to pass that Mr. Macaulay's words came true — the curtain fell upon a favorite, by grace of the warm and kindly hearts of the Cincinnatians, who were quick to see merits and ever ready to forgive errors.

The Hebrew citizens, who are enthusiastic and most generous patrons of the theatre, became especially fond

of me, so much so indeed that the company christened me "Rebecca," in jesting allusion to their favor, of which I was nevertheless very proud, for better judges of matters theatrical it would be hard to find.

When my mother arrived, we settled down in our little rooms, where my trunks, which had to be opened every day for the nightly change of costume, had to stand one on top of another in order to make room for an old battle-scarred piano that I had hired.

I do not know its maker's name — no one knows — which was well for that person, because his act in constructing such a thing placed him in the criminal classes. It seemed to be a cross between a coffin and a billiard-table, and there was just enough left of its rubber cover to make an evil smell in the room.

Had it not been for the generosity of the leader of the orchestra (Mr. Navoni) I could not have enjoyed the luxury of even a few music lessons, but he saw my willingness to learn — to practise when possible, and loving music rapturously himself, he took a generous delight in helping others to the knowledge he had such a store of. Therefore, for a ridiculously small price, just enough, he said, to properly mark our relations as master and pupil, he introduced me to my notes and lines and ledger-lines, too (confound them!), and accidentals and sharps (which I hated) and flats (which I liked), and I developed a great affection for *c*, because I could always find it, while I hate *a* to this hour because of the trouble it gave me so long ago.

One thing I am sure of, had anyone awakened me suddenly from a deep sleep at that time I would instantly have exclaimed: "One *and* two *and* three *and*." Mr. Navoni and his wife had the room directly over ours; of course I knew every loud sound we made must penetrate to his room, and as I could conceive of nothing more maddening than to have to listen to a beginner's *one*, two, three — *one*, two, three, I tried to practise when he was out, which was difficult, as our hours were the

same. Then one day, knowing he was composing a march for a special occasion, I closed the piano and determined I would not disturb him with any noise of mine.

Upstairs, then, Mr. Navoni sat, rumpled as to hair, fiery as to eye, with violin on table and pen in hand. He hummed a little, tried one or two bars on the violin, then savagely threw a few notes of ink on to his ruled paper. Then he hummed a little, and seemed to listen, jotted down a note or two, listened attentively, and then burst out: "Do you hear a sound of practice from Miss Morris's room?"

"No, dear," gently replied Mrs. Navoni, "she doesn't want to disturb you at your work, she ——"

But a burst of wrath stopped her. Mr. Navoni was clattering downstairs and pounding on our door: "What does this mean? Get you to that devilish bad piano and do your scales — *scales,* mind you — let the exercises wait till the last! Interrupt me? Love I not music! nothing is sweeter to me than the '*one,* two, three' of the beginner — *if* the beginner is not a fool — *if* the beginner counts the '*one,* two, three' correctly! Damn! yes, I say *damn!* look at the time lost! afraid to disturb me? How the devil am I to compose that march they want with this room still as the dead? Now I go back, and if you don't do those scales, all smooth and even, and the exercises rightly timed, you — well, you know what you'll get! I can hear, even if I am composing. So you get to work, quick now! before I get back to my table!"

And he tore off again, while, with clammy fingers, I sat down to the wretched old piano, that was showing its teeth at me in a senile grin, and feebly and uncertainly began to wobble up and down the keyboard.

Mrs. Navoni afterward told me that when her husband returned to his work he hummed to himself a few moments, jotted down a few notes, listened to the sound of the rattling old piano, and, smiling and nodding, remarked: "*Now* I can do something — *one,* two, three

— *one,* two, three — that's right. I couldn't compose a bar with her wasting a precious hour down there. She keeps good time, eh, doesn't she? Now I'll give the boys something that will move their feet for them!" and he returned to the march.

The thing which I was to get if I failed to practise correctly was so unusual that I feel I must explain it. Mr. Navoni wore an artificial foot and leg of the cumbrous type then offered to the afflicted, and in the privacy of his own room he used to remove the burdensome thing and lay it on a chair by the couch on which he rested or read or wrote, and when I, down-stairs, made a first mistake in my practice, he growled and kicked viciously with his "for-true" leg, while a second blunder would make him seize his store-leg and pound the floor. Then when I began again he would whack the correct time with it with such emphasis that bits of my ceiling would come rattling down about me and the gas-fixture threatened not to remain a fixture.

Another trick of his was to bring down his violin with him. How my heart sank when I saw it, and, my lesson over, he requested me to play such or such an exercise: "And keep to your own business, and leave my business to me, if you please, Miss. *Now!*"

I was then expected to go over and over that exercise and keep perfect time, while he stood behind me and improvised on the violin, growing more and more distracting every moment, and if that led my attention away from my *one,* two, three, what a crack I got across the top of my ear from his fiddle-bow, and a sharp order to: "Go back — go back! *one,* two, three; *one,* two, three! Cry by and by, but now play! *One,* two, three!"

I should have thought myself a hopeless case, and given up, had I not one morning overheard him boasting to some of the musicians: "That I was a good enough leading woman, he supposed, but it was as a piano pupil that I really counted for something. Why," he cried, "she has the most perfect ear, and such steadiness — a

whole band-wagon of instruments turned loose on her wouldn't make her lose time!"

I smiled and felt of my even then burning ear, but still his boast encouraged me to return to my scales, which were wofully interrupted by the necessity I experienced of clawing up with my nails several old keys that were too weak to rise again having once been pressed down.

When Mr. Navoni played, and he came to one of those tired-out ivories, he put a *damn* in the place of the absent note, but for obvious reasons I could not do that. But Mr. Navoni was an earnest, determined, and enthusiastic teacher, and I remember him gratefully and respectfully.

The widow of the boarding-house differs from the widow of the Testament in that the boarding-house widow's cruse of oil seems always "just out," and her meal at a like low ebb. Neither my mother nor myself were used to luxuries; we expected little, and, truth to tell, we got it. To say we were nearly always hungry would be putting things quite mildly, but we were *together!* and so 'twas better to feel a bit "gone" under the belt than to be filled to repletion and live apart.

I worked hard at all times, and five nights out of seven I had to study till far on toward morning. The Saturday brought me a double performance, and left me a wreck; thus I thought I had a right to a bit of a treat on Sunday; and I can see the important air mother unconsciously assumed as she went forth on her secret errand — secret that no offence might be given to the economical landlady.

When the matinée was over I brought home my personal offering for our next day's comfort and pleasure — a copy of an illustrated weekly paper and five cents' worth of candy, always something hard that would last us long while we read. Thus on Saturday night, on the sill of the back window, there stood a small can of oysters, while in the top drawer rested a box marked

handkerchiefs, but which held crackers, beside it a folded paper, and on top of that the wee package of candy.

I had a membership at the library on the corner, so we had books, too, thank heaven! I have always been a fairly regular church-goer; in Cincinnati the limitations of my wardrobe would have made me conspicuous. I had but one street dress in the world, and constant wear in rain or shine made it a very shabby affair. In novels the heroine who has but one gown is always so exquisitely gloved and shod, and her veil and neck-wear are so immaculately fresh, that no one notices the worn dress; but in real life it's just the gloves and shoes and veils and ruffles that cost the most money, yet their absence stamps you ill-bred in the eyes of other women. Therefore I knew the inside of but one church in Cincinnati, "Christ's Episcopal," and only knew that in the spring, when I had fluttered forth in new gown and gloves and things; so Sundays were given over to a late breakfast, a little reading in the Bible, a good long reading of secular matter, sweetened by candy, a calm acceptance (that was puzzling to the Navonis) of a shadowy dinner, a short walk if weather permitted, then, oh, then! a locked door, a small tea-pot, a tiny saucepan (we had not the bliss of owning a chafing-dish), and presently we sat enjoying, to the last spoonful, a hot and delicious stew, a pot of tea, that brought to mind many stories and made old jokes dance forth with renewed youth, and kept us loitering over our small banquet in a quite disgraceful way. Then back to our novels again till bedtime, and next day, all fresh and rested, I began my "one *and* two *and* three *and*" before breakfast, and thus won approval from Navoni and started a new week's work under fair auspices.

CHAPTER THIRTIETH

New York City is Suggested to Me by Mr. Worthington and Mr. Johnson — Mr. Ellsler's Mild Assistance — I Journey to New York, and Return to Cincinnati with Signed Contract from Mr. Daly.

TO say I made a success in Cincinnati is the barest truth. Almost at once — the third night of the season, to be exact — I received my first anonymous gift: a very beautiful and expensive set of jewelry, pale-pink corals in combined dead and burnished gold. They rested in their satin-lined nest and tempted me. The sender wrote: "Show that you forgive my temerity by wearing my offering in the third act."

I did not wear them in any act, and yet, oh, eternal feminine! I "tried them on" — at least I put one ring in my ear and held the pendant against my throat, "just to see" how they *would* have looked, you know.

Flowers came over the footlights, the like of which I had never seen in my life before — great baskets of hothouse beauties, some of them costing more than I earned in a week. Then one night came a bolder note, with a big gold locket. A signature made it possible for me to return that gift next morning.

All that sort of thing was new to me, and, naturally, pleasing — yes, because earned approbation pleases one, even though it be not quite correctly expressed. It soon became whispered about that I sent back all gifts of jewelry, and lo! one matinée, with a splendid basket of white camelias, fringed about with poinsetta leaves, there came a box of French candied fruit. My! what a sensation it created in the dressing-room. I remember

some of the ladies (we dressed in one great long room there) took bits of peach and of green figs to show their friends, while I devoted myself to the cherries and apricots. That seemed to start a fashion, for candies, in dainty boxes, came to me as often as flowers afterward, and, to my great pride and pleasure, were often from women, and my Saturday five cents' allowance was turned over to mother for the banqueting fund — that meant a bit of cheese for supper.

At the time of the season's opening there was a man in Cincinnati who was there sorely against his will, a wealthy native of the city, a lawyer who would not practise, a traveler in distant lands, he had lived mainly for his own pleasure and had grown as weary of that occupation as he could possibly have grown had he practised the law. Tired of everything else, he still kept his liking for the theatre. Living in New York in the winter, at Cape May in the summer, he only came to his old home when someone was irritating enough to die and need burying in state, or when some lawsuit required his attention, as in this instance. So, being there, and not knowing what else to do, he had gone dully and moodily to the theatre, saying to his cousin companion: "I'll take a look at Macaulay's new leading lady, and then I'll sleep through the rest of the evening comfortably, for no one can talk to me here as they do at the hotel" — and the country *Cicely* had appeared, and, to use Mr. Worthington's own words: he had sat up straight as a ramrod and as wide-awake as a teething baby for the rest of the evening.

Between acts he had made inquiries as to the history of the new actress, only to find that, like most happy women, she had none. She came from Cleveland, she lived three doors away with her mother — that was all. On that first night he had said: "Good Lord, Will, what is that girl doing out here in the West? I must see her in a better part. What's on to-morrow night? Secure our seats for the season, that will save a lot of

trouble;" and incidentally it made a lot of annoyance for me.

Next night I played what actresses call a "dressed part," which, in spite of suggestion, does not mean that there are parts that are not dressed, only that the character wears fine clothes instead of plain ones. It was a bright, light comedy part. The audience was enthusiastic, though, of course, I was only supporting the star. Then Mr. Worthington exclaimed: "That girl ought to be in New York this very moment!"

"Do you think so?" questioned his inseparable.

"Do I think so?" mocked his cousin. "Yes, I know it. I know the theatres foreign — their schools and styles, as well as I know the home theatres and their actors. I believe I've made a discovery!"

A beautiful mass of flowers came to me that night with Mr. Worthington's visiting card, without message. The third night I played a tearful part; the papers (as the women put it) "went on awful," and Mr. Worthington, snapping his glasses into their case, said, as he rose: "I shall never rest till this Clara Morris faces New York. She need clash with no one, need hurt no one, she is unlike anyone else, and New York has plenty of room for her. I shall make it my business to meet her some way or other, and preach New York until she accepts the idea and acts upon it."

His visit to Cincinnati was prolonged; his young cousin, Mr. Will Burnett, thought he was on the high-road to crankiness on the subject. Then Mr. Worthington discovered we had a common friend in lawyer Egbert Johnson, and he was presented in proper form to my mother (oh, wise Mr. Worthington), and winning her approval by praise of her wonderful chick (where is the mother that does not readily believe her goose a swan?), she in her turn presented him to me, and for the first time I listened to a suggestion of coming to New York.

To say I was amused at the idea would be putting it mildly indeed, for I was tickled to such laughter that

tears came to my eyes. He was annoyed, but I laughed on. He waited — I was called upon for some heavy tragic parts. He came again — I laughed still.

"Good heavens!" I cried, "I'm not pretty enough!"

He said: "You have your eyes and voice and expression, and you don't seem to be suffering much here from your lack of beauty."

"N-no," I answered, naïvely, "you see, all the women in this company are rather plain."

He laughed, but he continued to urge me to try for an engagement in New York.

"I don't know enough," I faltered.

"You lack polish of manner, perhaps," he admitted, "but you will acquire that quickly, while no one can acquire your fire and strength and pathos! For God's sake, let me do one unselfish act in my life — let me serve you in this matter. I will go to the managers in New York and speak for you."

But that offer I curtly declined, asking him how long my reputation would remain unassailed if I allowed him to act for me.

In spite of all his praise of my work, I should have remained unmoved had Mr. Johnson not joined forces with Mr. Worthington, and calmly assured me that he, too, knew the New York theatres and actors, and he honestly believed I had a chance of acceptance by the public, if only a manager would give me an opening, for, said he: "Worthington is right this time, you really are an exceptionally clever girl, so why should you bury yourself in small Western cities?"

"Oh!" I indignantly cried, "Cleveland and Cincinnati are very big cities, indeed!"

"Yes," smiled Mr. Johnson, "but New York is quite a bit larger, and besides you would like to be accepted by the metropolis of your country, would you not?"

And straightway my heart gave a bound, my cheeks began to burn, the leaven was working at last — my ambition was awakened! I wondered day and night, could

I act well enough to please New York? I thought not; I thought yes! I thought — I thought there could be no harm just to ask the managers if they had an opening. But there my courage failed me — I could not. I never had written to a manager in my life, save to answer a letter. Finally, I wrote to Mr. Ellsler — he knew all the New York managers (few then) — and told him I was about to ask my first favor at his hands. Would he write to one or two managers for me, or give me a line of introduction to them? and his unexpected opposition to my plans, the cold water he cast upon my warm hopes, instead of crushing my spirit utterly, aroused the old dogged determination to do what I had undertaken to do — make a try for a New York opening!

The controversy finally ended in my receipt of a letter from Mr. Ellsler informing me he had written to four managers, and said what he could for me — which proved to be mighty little, as I afterward saw two of the four letters, as they were in duplicate, though one was to a stranger, one to an acquaintance, and two to friends. He simply asked: "If they had an opening for a young woman, named Clara Morris, for leading or leading-juvenile business." That was all; not a word of recommendation for ability or mention of years of thorough experience — not even the conventional expression of a personal obligation if they were able to consider my application.

Had I been a manager, and had I received such a letter, I know I should have cast it aside, thinking: "Oh, that's a duty letter and amounts to nothing. If the girl had any recommendations for the position he would have said so." Still, some answers were returned, though Mr. Wallack ignored his copy. Mr. Jarrett (of Jarrett & Palmer) wrote Mr. Ellsler that they were bound to spectacular ("Black Crook") for the year to come, and had no earthly use for an actress above a soubrette or a walking lady. Mr. Edwin Booth wrote: "If you had only addressed me a few days earlier. I re-

member well the young woman of whom you speak. I have unfortunately" (this last word was crossed out) —"I have just closed with Miss Blanche DeBar — old Ben is persistent and has great confidence in her, and, as I said, I have just closed with her for the coming season. With," etc., etc.

Then there was a wee bit of paper — little, niggly-naggly, jetty-black, impishly vindictive-looking writing on two short-waisted lines of about eleven words each. That was from Mr. Daly, and it snapped out this information: "If you send the young woman to me I will willingly consider proposal. Will engage no actress without seeing her. A. Daly."

These letters were blithely sent to me by Mr. Ellsler, who evidently looked upon the question as closed, but that was where we differed. I considered it a question just fairly opened. I admit Mr. Daly's calm ordering of me from Cincinnati to his office in New York for inspection staggered me at first, but there was that line: "I will willingly consider the proposal;" that was all I had to trust to; not much, heaven knows! "Yet," I argued, "he is evidently a man who says much in little; at all events, though the chance is small, it is the only one offered, and, if I can stand the expense, I'll go and take that chance."

I would have to obtain leave of absence; I would have to pay a woman for at least two performances, even if I got off on Saturday night; I would have to stop one night in a hotel at New York, and, oh, dear, oh, dear! would I dare to risk so much — to spend all my little savings toward the summer vacation for this trip that might end disastrously after all? I read again: *"Will engage no actress without seeing her."* Well, that settled the matter. Suddenly I seemed to hear my old Irish washerwoman saying: "Ah, well! God niver shuts one dure without opening anither!" I laughed a bit and decided to risk my savings — nothing venture, nothing win!

That very night I asked leave of absence; the time was most favorable — I obtained it. I found next day an actress to take my place on Monday and Tuesday evenings. Then mother and I emptied out our flat and old pocket-books. I brought from its secret hiding-place the little roll of bills saved for summer's idle time, and we put all in a pile. Then I drew out a week's board in advance and gave it to mother; drew out enough to pay the woman who took my place, and all the rest, to the last dollar, was required for the expenses of my solitary journey to the great beckoning city by the sea.

As I closed my pocket-book, I said to myself: "There, I have shut one door with my own hand, but I'll trust God to open another for me before vacation arrives."

There's an old saw that gravely states: "It never rains but it pours," and surely business opportunities "poured" upon me at that time, for in that very week I received two offers of engagements, and one of them, had not the New York bee been buzzing so loudly in my bonnet, would have driven me quite wild with delight. That was from Mr. Thomas Maguire, of San Francisco, and the salary was to me enormous. One hundred dollars a week in gold, a benefit, and no vacation at all, unless I wished it. I temporized. I wished to gain time enough to learn my fate in New York before deciding. But Mr. Maguire was in haste, and as I hurried from the theatre to start on my journey, a long envelope was placed in my hands. I opened it on the cars, and found signed contracts for the leading business at San Francisco, with an *extra* benefit added as an inducement for me to accept.

So I journeyed onward to tempt Fate, a little forlorn and frightened at first, but receiving so many courtesies and little kindnesses from my more fortunately placed fellow-travelers, that I quite forgot to be either frightened or forlorn — but was amazed at the beauty of the stately river we crossed, whose ripples caught the glowing color of the sky and broke them into jewels; and beyond that silvery curtain of haze stretched the great

city of my dreams, all circled round and guarded by living waters.

Then I was ashore again and clambering into the great swaying coach of the Fifth Avenue Hotel, the conductor having told me it was right next door to the theatre. I breakfasted, took from my bag a new gray veil, a pair of gray gloves, a bit of fresh ruffling, and a needle and thread, with which I basted the ruffle into the neck of my gown; put on the veil and gloves, that being all the preparation I could make by way of toilet to meet the arbiter of Fate, said "Our Father," and coming to "Amen" with a jerk, discovered I had not been conscious of the meaning of one single word, and whispering with shame, "only lip service," remorsefully repeated again, and with absolute sincerity, that prayer which expresses so simply, so briefly, all our needs, physical and spiritual; that places us at once in the comforting position of a beloved child asking with confidence for a father's aid. A prayer whose beauty and strength share in the immortality of its Divine composer.

And then I rose and went forth, prepared to accept success or defeat, just as the good Lord should will.

As I passed around the hotel and approached the theatre on Twenty-fourth Street, an enormous upheaval of ice blocked the way — ice piled shoulder high in front of the theatre door, and on one side of the glittering mass stood a long, tall, thin man, as mad as a hornet, while on the other side, stolidly, stupidly silent, stood a squat Irishman, holding an ice-man's tongs in one hand and his shock of red hair in the other. The long, flail-like arms of the tall man were in wild motion. In righteous wrath he was trying to make the bog-trotter understand that the ice was for the hotel, whose storage door was but a few feet to his right, when he saw me making chamois-like jumps over the blocks of ice trying to reach the door. With black-browed courtesy he told me to use the second door, that morning, to reach the box-office.

I had, all unconsciously, formed an idea of Mr. Daly, and I was looking for a small, dark, very dark, nervously irritable man, and was therefore frankly amused at the wrath of the long, thin man, whose vest and whose trousers could not agree as to the exact location of the waist-line, and laughed openly at the ice-scene, winning in return as black a scowl as any stage-villain could well wear. Then I cheerfully remarked: "I'm looking for Mr. Daly; can you tell me where I am likely to find him?"

"You want Mr. Daly?" he repeated. "Who are you?"

"I'll tell Mr. Daly that, please," I answered.

He smiled and said: "Well, then, tell *me* — I'm Mr. Daly — are you ——"

"Yes," I answered, "I'm the girl come out of the West, to be inspected. I'm Clara Morris."

He frowned quickly, though he held out his hand and shook mine heartily enough, and asked me to come into his office.

It was a cranny in the wall. It held a very small desk and one chair, behind which was a folding stool. As he entered, I laughingly said: "I think I'll lean here, I'm not used to sitting on the floor," but to my surprise, as he brought forth the stool, he curtly replied: "I was not going to ask you to sit on the floor," which so amused me that I could not resist asking: "Are you from Scotland, by chance, Mr. Daly?" and he had frowningly said "No!" before the old, old joke about Scotch density came to him.

Then he said, with severity: "Miss Morris, I'm afraid your bump of reverence is not well developed."

And I laughed and said: "There's a hole there, Mr. Daly, and no bump at all," and though the words were jestingly spoken, there was truth and to spare in them, and there, too, was the cause of all the jolts and jars and friction between us in our early days together. Mr. Daly was as a god in his wee theatre, and was always

taken seriously. I knew not gods and took nothing under heaven seriously. No wonder we jarred. Every word I spoke that morning rubbed Mr. Daly's fur the wrong way. I offended him again and again. He wished to show me the theatre, and, striking a match, lit a wax taper and held it up in the auditorium, at which I exclaimed: "Oh, the pretty little match-box! Why, it's just a little toy play-house — is it not?"

Which vexed him so I was quite crushed for a minute or two. One thing only pleased him: I could not tear myself away from the pictures, and I praised, rapturously, a beautiful velvety-shadowed old engraving. We grew quite friendly over that, but when we came to business he informed me I was a comedy woman, root and branch.

"But," I said, "ask Mr. Edwin Booth, or Mr. Davenport, or Mr. Adams!"

He waved me down. "I won't ask anyone," he cried; "I never made a mistake in my life. You couldn't speak a line of sentiment to save your soul!"

"Why, sentiment is my line of business — I play sentiment every week of my life," I protested.

"Oh, you know what I mean," he said, "you can *speak* and *repeat* the lines, but you couldn't give a line of sentiment naturally to save your life — your forte is comedy, pure and simple."

It all ended in his offer to engage me, but without a stated line of business. I must trust to his honor not to degrade me by casting me for parts unworthy me. He would give me $35 a week (knowing there were two to live on it), *if I made a favorable impression he would double that salary.*

A poor offer — a risky undertaking. I had no one to consult with. I had in my pocket the signed contract for $100 in gold and two benefits. I must decide now, at once. Mr. Daly was filling up a blank contract. Thirty-five dollars against $100! *"But if you make a favorable impression* you'll get $70," I thought. And why should I not make a favorable impression? Yet, if

I fail now in New York, I can go West or South, not much harmed. If I wait till I am older, and fail, it will ruin my life.

I slipped my hand in my pocket and gave a little farewell tap to the contract for $100. I took the pen; I looked hard at him. "There's a heap of trusting being asked for in this contract," I remarked. "You won't forget your promise about doubling the salary?"

"I won't forget anything," he answered.

I looked at the pen, it was a stub, the first I ever saw; then I said: "That's what makes your writing look so villainous. I can't sign with that thing — I'd be ashamed to own my signature in court, when we come to the fight we're very likely to have before we are through with each other."

He groaned at my levity, but got another pen. I wrote Clara Morris twice, shook hands, and went out and back to my home — a Western actress with an engagement in a New York theatre for the coming season.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIRST

John Cockerill and our Eccentric Engagement — I Play a Summer Season at Halifax — Then to New York, and to House-Keeping at Last.

MR. WORTHINGTON passed out of my life after he had done me the service he set out to do. It had been an odd notion to step down from his carriage, as it were, and point out to a girl, struggling along a rough and dusty path, a short cut to the fair broad highway of prosperity; but I thank him heartily, for without his urging voice, his steadily pointing hand, I should have continued plodding along in the dust — heaven knows how long.

One of the few people I came to know well in Cincinnati was John A. Cockerill. At that time he was the city editor on the *Enquirer,* and my devoted friend. We were both young, poor, energetic, ambitious. We exchanged confidences, plans, hopes, and dreams, and were as happy as possible so long as we were just plain friends, but as soon as sentiment pushed in and an engagement was acknowledged between us, we, as the farmer says:

"Quarrel'd and fit — and scratched and bit —"

For John was jealous of my profession, which made my temper hot, and we were a queer engaged pair. I used to say to him: "It's just a question which one of us suicides first!"

Yet on some days we would forget we were engaged and be quite cheerful and happy; and when I came back from New York, I cried: "Congratulate me, John, I've got an engagement, so we can't nag each other to death

for a year at least!" and though that gave a lovely opening for a quarrel he passed it by, congratulating me very gently instead, but very sadly, adding: "You are getting so far ahead of me, dear — and you will learn to despise a man who comes toiling always behind you!"

A statement that came so dangerously near the truth that it threw me into a passion, and we had a battle royal then and there. However, we parted in a gale of laughter, for as John suddenly discovered he was overstaying his intended short visit, he sprang up and grabbed his hat and exclaimed: "Well, good-by, Clara, we haven't indulged in much sentiment to-day, but," drawing a long, satisfied breath, "we've enjoyed a good lusty old row all the same!"

No wonder we laughed. We were a rare engaged couple. Lovers? why Cupid had never even pointed an arrow at us for fun! We were chums — good fellows in sunny weather; loyal, active friends in time of trouble, and, after I came to New York, and found quarreling at length, with pen and ink, too fatiguing, I broke the engagement, and we were happy ever after — our friendship always standing firm through the years; and when, in the *Herald's* interests, he started on that last long journey to report upon the Japanese-Chinese War, he said to me: "I never understood the meaning of the word friendship until that day when you flung all your natural caution — your calm good sense aside, and rushed through the first cheering message that reached me after that awful St. Louis shooting: 'You acted in self-defence, I *know* — command any service from your faithful friend,' that's what you said, over your full name, while as yet you knew absolutely nothing. And when I realized that, guilty or innocent, you meant to stand by me, I — well, you and my blessed mother live in a little corner of my heart, just by your two loyal selves."

And when he left me he carried on either cheek as affectionate a kiss as I knew how to put there, and again, and for the last time, we parted in a gale of laughter, as

he cried: "You would have seen me in the bottomless pit before you would have done that in Cincinnati!"

"Oh, well," I replied, "we both preferred quarreling to kissing in those days!"

"Speak for yourself!" he laughed, and so we parted for all time.

I had returned to my work in Cincinnati; had thanked the Washington and San Francisco managers for their offers of engagements, and was putting in some spare moments in worrying about the summer, when (without meaning to be irreverent) God opened a door right before me. Never, since I had closed a small geography at school, had I heard of "Halifax," save as a substitute for another place beginning with H, but here, all suddenly, I was invited to Halifax — not sent there in anger, for, oh, incredible! for a four, perhaps six, weeks' summer engagement. Was I not happy? Was I not grateful? One silver half-dollar did I recklessly give away to the Irish washerwoman, who had said: "God niver shuts one dure without openin' anither!" I could not help it, and she, being in trouble at the time, declared, with hope rising in her tired old eyes, that she would "at onct burn a waxen candle before the blissed Virgin!" Poor soul! I hope her loving offering found favor in the eyes of the gentle Saint she honored!

I had a benefit in Cincinnati before the season closed, and so it came about that I was able to get my mother a spring gown and bonnet that she might go home in proper state to Cleveland for a visit; while I turned my face toward Halifax, the picturesque, to play a summer engagement, and then to make my way to New York and find a resting-place for my foot in some hotel, while I searched for rooms to which my mother might be summoned, for I had determined I could board no longer.

If we had rooms we could make a little home in them. If we had still to go hungry, we could at least hunger after our own fashion, and endure our privations in decent privacy. So, with plans all made, I landed at Hali-

fax and felt a shock of surprise, followed by a pang of homesickness, at the first sight of the scarlet splendor of the British flag waving against the pale blue sky, when instinctively my eyes had looked for the radiant beauty of Old Glory. The next thing that impressed me was the astonishing number of people who were in mourning. Men in shops, in offices, on the streets, were wearing crêpe bands about their left arms, and women, like moving pillars of crêpe, dotted the walks thickly, darkened the shops, and gloomed in private carriages. What does it mean? I asked. I never before saw so many people in black. And one made answer: "Ah, your question shows you are a stranger, or you would know that there are few well-to-do homes and *no* business house in Halifax that does not mourn for at least one victim of that great mystery of the sea, the unexplained loss of the City of Boston — that monster steamer, crowded with youth and beauty, wealth, power, and brains!"

I recalled then how, at the most fashionable wedding of the year in Cincinnati, the bride and groom had been dragged from the just-beginning wedding-breakfast, and rushed off at break-neck speed that they might be in time for the sailing of the City of Boston, and after her sailing no word ever came of her. What had been her fate no man knew — no man knows to-day. The ocean gave no sign, no clew, as it often has done in other disasters. It sent back no scrap of wood, of oar, of boat, of mast, of life-preserver — nothing, nothing! No fire had been sighted by other ships. Had she been in collision with an iceberg, been caught in the centre of a tornado, had she run upon a derelict, been stricken by lightning, been blown up by explosion? No answer had ever come from the mighty bosom of the deep, that will keep its grim secret until the awful day when, trembling at God's own command, it will give up its dead! Meantime thousands of tender ties were broken. The awful mystery shrouding the fate of the floating city turned more than one

brain, and sent mourners to mad-houses to end their ruined lives. Halifax was a very sad city that summer.

I met in the company there Mr. Leslie Allen (the father of Miss Viola Allen), Mr. Dan Maginnis (the Boston comedian), and Mr. John W. Norton. The future St. Louis manager was then leading man, and the friendship we formed while working together through those summer weeks was never broken, never clouded, but lasted fair and strong up to that very day when, sitting in the train on his way to New York, John Norton had, in that flashing moment of time, put off mortality.

He had changed greatly from the John Norton of those early days. He had known cruel physical suffering, and while he had won friends and money, shame and bitter sorrow had been brought upon him by another. No wonder the laughing brightness had gone out of him. It was said that he believed in but two people on earth — Mary Anderson and Clara Morris, and he said of them: "One is a Catholic, the other an Episcopalian; they are next-door neighbors in religion; they are both honest, God-fearing women, and the only ones I bow my head to." Oh, poor man! to have grown so bitter! But in the Halifax days he loved his kind, and was as full of fun as a boy of ten, as full of kindness as would be the gentlest woman.

Mr. Maginnis had his sister-in-law with him, a helpless invalid. She knew her days were numbered, yet she always faced us smilingly and with pleasant words. She was passionately fond of driving, but dreaded lonely outings; so clubbing together, that no one might feel a sense of obligation, we four, Dan and his sister, John Norton and I, used evenly to divide the expense of a big, comfortable carriage, and go on long, delightful drives about the outskirts of the gray old hilly city.

The stolid publicity of Tommy Atkins's love-making had at first covered us with confusion, but we soon grew used to the sight of the scarlet sleeve about the willing waist in the most public places, while a loving smack,

coming from the direction of a park bench, simply became a sound quite apropos to the situation.

One yellow-haired, plaided and kilted young Highlander, whom I came upon in a public garden, just as he lifted his head from an explosive kiss on his sweetheart's lips, startled at my presence, flushing red, lifted his hand in a half-salute, and at the same moment, in laughing apologetic confusion, he — winked at me! And his flushing young face was so bonnie, that had I known how I believe in my heart I'd have winked back, just from sheer good-fellowship and understanding.

In that short season I had one experience, the memory of which makes me pull a wry face to this day. I played *Juliet* to a "woman-*Romeo*" — a so plump *Romeo*, who seemed all French heels, tights, and wig, with *Romeo* marked "absent." I little dreamed I was bidding a personal farewell to Shakespeare and the old classic drama, as I really was doing.

One other memory of that summer engagement that sticks is of that performance of Boucicault's "Jessie Brown, or the Siege of Lucknow," in which real soldiers acted as supernumeraries, and having been too well treated beforehand and being moved by the play, they became so hot that they attacked the *mutineers* not only with oaths but with clubbed muskets; and while blood was flowing and heads being cracked in sickening earnest on one side of the stage, a sudden wall-rending howl of derisive laughter rose from that part of the theatre favored by soldiers. I saw women holding programmes close, close to their eyes, and knew by that that something was awfully wrong.

The Scotch laddies were pouring over the wall, coming to the rescue of the starving besieged. I looked behind me. The wall, a stage wall, was cleated down the middle to keep the join there firm, and no less than three of the soldiers had had portions of their clothing caught by the cleats as they scaled the wall. The cloth would not tear, the men were too mad to be able to see, and

there they hung, kicking like fiends and — well, the words of a ginny old woman, who sold apples and oranges in front of the house, will explain the situation. She cried out, at the top of her voice: "Yah! yah! why do ye no pull down yer kilties, instead o' kickin' there? yah! yer no decent — do you ken?" and the curtain had to come whirling down before the proper time to save the lives of the men being pounded to death, and the feelings of the women who were being shamed to death.

A surgeon had to attend to two heads before their owners could leave the theatre, and after that an officer was kind enough to come and take charge of the men loaned to the manager.

Then I bade the people, whom I had found so pleasant, good-by — Mr. Louis Aldrich arriving as I was about leaving, keen, clever, active, full of visions, of plans, just as he is to-day. I and my little dog-companion made our way to New York. A lady and gentleman, traveling acquaintances, advised me to go to the St. Nicholas, and as all hotels looked alike to me I went there. My worst dread was the dining-room. I could not afford to take meals privately, yet how could I face that great roomful of people alone! At last I resolved on a plan of action. I went up to the head waiter — from his manner an invisible crown pressed his brow; his eyes gazed coldly above my humble head, his "Eh? — beg pardon!" was haughty and curt, yet, believe it or not, when I told him I was quite alone, and asked could he place me at some quiet retired table, he became human, he looked straightly and kindly at me. He himself escorted me, not to a seat in line with the kitchen smells or the pantry quarrels, as I had expected, but to a very retired, very pleasant table by an open window, and assured me the seat should be reserved for me every day of my stay, and only ladies seated there. I was grateful from my heart, and I mention it now simply to show the general willingness there is in America to aid, to oblige the unprotected woman traveler.

Naturally anxious to find, as quickly as possible, a less expensive dwelling-place, I showed my utter ignorance of the city by the blunder I made in joyfully engaging rooms in a quiet old-fashioned brick house because it was on Twenty-first Street and the theatre was on Twenty-fourth, and the walk would be such a short one. All good New Yorkers will know just how "short" that walk was when I add that to reach the neat little brick house I had first to cross to Second Avenue, and, alas! for me on stormy nights, there was no cross-town car, then.

However, the rooms were sunny and neatly furnished; the rent barely within my reach, but the entire Kiersted family were so unaffectedly kind and treated me so like a rather overweighted young sister that I could not have been driven away from the house with a stick. I telegraphed to mother to come. She came.

To the waiter who feeling the crown upon his brow yet treated me with almost fatherly kindness, I gave a small parting offering and my thanks; and to the chambermaid also — she with the pure complexion, bred from buttermilk and potatoes, and the brogue rich and thick enough to cut with a knife — who had "discoursed" to me at great length on religion, on her own chances of matrimony, on the general plan of the city, describing the "lay" of the diagonal avenues, their crossing streets and occasional junctures, in such confusing terms that a listening city-father would have sent out and borrowed a blind man's dog to help him find his home. Still she had talked miles a day with the best intentions, and I made my small offering to her in acknowledgment, and leaving her very red with pleasure, I departed from the hotel. That blessed evening found my mother and me house-keeping at last — *at last!* And as we sat over our tea, little Bertie, on the piano-stool at my side, ate buttered toast; then, feeling license in the air, slipped down, crept under the table, and putting beseeching small paws on mother's knee, ate more buttered toast — came back

to me and the piano-stool, and bringing forth all her blandishments pleaded for a lump of sugar. She knew it was wrong, she knew *I* knew it was wrong, but, good heavens! it was our house-warming — Bertie got the sugar. So we were settled and happily ready to begin the new life in the great strange city.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SECOND

I Recall Mr. John E. Owens, and How He "Settled my Hash."

JUST previous to my coming East I met, for the first time, Mr. John E. Owens. He was considered a wealthy man, and was at the height of his popularity as a comedian. He was odd, even his marriage seemed an expression of eccentricity, and one felt as if one had received a dash of cold water in the face when the hot-tempered, peppery, and decidedly worldly Mr. Owens presented the little orthodox Quakeress, with a countenance of gentle severity, as his wife.

She wore the costume of her people, too, and watched him above her knitting-needles with folded lips and condemning eye as he strutted and fumed and convulsed his audience. She was said to be a most tender and gentle nurse and, indeed, a devoted wife, but she certainly seemed to look down upon theatrical life and people.

Mr. Owens was telling me she was a clever business woman, with a quick eye for a good investment, when I jestingly answered: "That seems to be a peculiarity of the sect — thee will recall the fact that William Penn showed that same quality of eye in his beautiful and touching relations with the shrewd and knowing Indians," and in the middle of his laugh, his mouth shut suddenly, his eyes rolled: "Oh, Lord!" he said, "you've done for yourself — she heard you, your fate's fixed!"

"But," I exclaimed, "I was just joking."

"No go!" he answered, mournfully, "the eye that can see the main chance so clearly is blind to a joke. She has you down now on her list of the ungodly. No use trying to explain — I gave that up years ago. Fact of

the matter is, when that Quakeress-wife of mine puts her foot down — I — well, I take mine up, but hers stays right there."

Mr. Owens was of medium height and very brisk in all his movements, walking with a short and quick little step. He had a wide mouth, good teeth, and a funny pair of eyes. The eyeballs were very large and round, and he showed an astonishing amount of their whites, which were of an unusual brilliancy and lustre; this, added to his power of rolling them wildly about in their sockets, made them very funny; indeed, they reminded many people of a pair of large peeled onions.

I think his most marked peculiarity was his almost frantic desire to provoke laughter in the actors about him. He would willingly throw away an entire scene — that is, destroy the illusion of the audience — in order to secure a hearty laugh from some actor or actress whom he knew not to be easily moved to laughter; and what was more astonishing still, if an actress in playing a scene with him fell from tittering into helpless laughter and failed to speak her lines, he made no angry protest, but regarded the situation with dancing eyes and delighted smiles, seeming to accept the breakdown as proof positive that he was irresistible as a fun-maker.

For some reason I never could laugh at "Solon Shingle." Mr. Owens had opened in that part, and as I stood in the entrance watching the performance, my face was as grave as that of the proverbial judge. He noticed it at once, and paused a moment to stare at me. Next morning, just as he entered and crossed to the prompt-table at rehearsal, I, in listening to a funny story, broke out in my biggest laugh. Open flew the star's eyes, up slid his eyebrows.

"Ha! ha!" said he, "ha! ha! there's a laugh for you — by Jove, that's a laugh as is a laugh!"

I turned about and faced him. He recognized me instantly. "Well, blast my cats!" he exclaimed, "say, you young hyena, you're the girl that wouldn't laugh at

me last night. I thought you couldn't, and just listen to your roars now over some tomfoolery. What was the matter with me, if you please, mum?"

I stood in helpless, awkward embarrassment, then, drawing in his lip and bulging out his eyes until they threatened to leap from their places, he advanced upon me, exclaiming: "Spare me these protestations and explanations, I beg!" then tapped me on the chest with his forefinger and, added, in a different tone: "My young friend, I'll make you laugh or I'll cut my throat!" next turned on his heel, and called: "Everybody ready for the first act? Come on, come on, let's get at it!"

Rehearsal began and Mr. Owens did not have to cut his throat.

Funny in many things, it was the old farce of "Forty Winks" that utterly undid me, and not only sat me violently and flatly down upon the entrance floor, but set me shrieking with such misguided force that next day all the muscles across and near my diaphragm were too lame and sore for me to catch a breath in comfort. Perhaps that's not the right word, and I may not be locating the lamed muscles properly, but if you will go to see some comedian who will make you laugh until you cry, and cry until you scream, and laugh and cry and scream until you only breathe in gasps and sobs, you will next morning know exactly which muscles I have been referring to — even if you haven't got a diaphragm about you.

But really the mad absurdities Mr. Owens indulged in that night might have made the very Sphinx smile stonily. As a miserly old man, eating his bread-and-cheese supper in his cheap little bedroom, and retiring for the night only to be aroused by officers who are in pursuit of a flying man, and think they have now found him. Not much to go upon, that, but, oh, if you could have seen his ravening hunger; have seen his dog-like snaps at falling crumbs; his slanting of the plate against the light to see if any streak of butter was being left;

his scooping up of bread-crumbs from his red-handkerchief lap, and eager licking up of the same; have seen him sorting out his money and laying aside the thin, worn pennies to give the waiter; breaking off the hardened grease that in melting had run down the candle's side, putting it away in his valise, "to grease his boots next winter" (a line he introduced for my especial benefit).

Having gone up-stage and taken off his shoes, he suddenly bethought him that there might be a few crumbs on the floor, and taking his candle, down he came to look, and turning his back to the audience, they screamed with sudden laughter, for two shining bare heels were plainly showing through his ragged black woollen socks. He paid no heed, but sought diligently, and when he found a crumb he put his finger to his lip to moisten it, and pouncing upon the particle, conveyed it to his mouth, and mumbled so luxuriously one almost envied him. Then, remarking that it was too cold to undress, he undressed, and as his coat came off he started toward a chair, saying, querulously: "He couldn't abide a man that wasn't neat and careful about his clothes," and down he pitched the coat in a heap upon the floor in front of the chair. His vest he dumped beside another seat, as he dolorously declared: "He had neat habits ever since his mother had taught him to put his clothes carefully on the chair at night."

And so he went up and down and about, until that stage was one litter of old clothes. Blowing out his candle he got into bed, and, shivering with cold, tried frantically to pull the clothes over his poor shoulders — but all in vain. At last a tremendous jerk brought the quilt and sheet about his shoulders, only to leave his ancient black feet facing the audience, all uncovered. And so went on the struggle between feet and shoulders until, worn out, the old man finally "spooned" himself with knees in chest, and so was covered and fell asleep, only to be aroused by officers, and turned into driveling idiocy by a demand "for the girl."

It was at the point when, sitting up in bed, trying, with agonizing modesty, to keep covered up, his eyes whitely and widely rolling, he pleadingly asked: "N-n-now I leave it to you — do I look like a seducer?" that my knees abandoned me to my fate, and sat me down with a vicious thud that nearly shook the life out of me. And John Owens sat in bed and saw my fall and rejoiced with a great joy, and said: "Blast my cats — look at the girl! there, now, that's something like laughing. I'd take off my hair and run around bald-headed for her!"

I was called upon to play blind *Bertha* to Mr. Owens's *Caleb Plummer* in the "Cricket on the Hearth," and I was in a great state of mind, as I had only seen one or two blind persons, and had never seen a blind part acted. I was driven at last by anxiety to ask Mr. Owens if he could make any suggestions as to business, or as to the walk or manner of the blind girl. But he was no E. L. Davenport, he had no desire to teach others to act, and he snappishly answered: "No — no! I can't suggest anything for you to do — but I can suggest something for you not to do! For God's sake don't go about playing the piano all evening — that's what the rest of 'em do!"

"The piano?" I repeated, stupidly.

"Yes," he said, "the piano! D—d if they don't make me sick! Here they go — all the *'Berthas'!*"

He closed his eyes, screwed up his face dismally, and advancing, his hands before him, began moving them from left to right and back, as though they were on a keyboard. It was very ridiculous.

"And that's what they call blindness — playing the piano and tramping about as securely as anybody!"

Ah, ah! Mr. Owens, you did make a suggestion after all, though you did not mean to do it, but I found one all the same in that last contemptuous sentence, "*tramping about as securely as anybody.*" It quickened my memory — I recalled the piteous uncertainty of movement in the blind; the dread hesitancy of the advancing

foot, unless the afflicted one was on very familiar ground. I tried walking in the dark, tried walking with closed eyes. It was surprising how quickly my fears gathered about my feet. Instinctively I put out one hand now and then, but the fear of bumping into something was as nothing to the fear of stepping off or down, or falling through the darkness — oh!

Then I resolved to play *Bertha* with open eyes. It was much the more difficult way, but I was well used to taking infinite pains over small matters, and believing that the open, unseeing eye was far more pathetic than the closed eye, I proceeded to work out my idea of how to produce the unseeing look. By careful experiment I found that if the eyes were very calm in expression, very slow in movement, and at all times were raised slightly above the proper point of vision, the effect was really that of blindness.

It was unspeakably fatiguing to keep looking just above people's heads, instead of into their faces, as was my habit, but where is the true actor or actress who stops to count the cost in pain or in inconvenience when striving to build up a character that the public may recognize? Says the ancient cook-book: "First catch your hare, and then — "; so with the actor, first catch your idea, your desired effect, and *then* reproduce it (if you can). But in the case of blind *Bertha* I must have reproduced with some success the effect I had been studying, for an old newspaper clipping beside me says that: "The doubting, hesitating advance of her foot, the timid uncertainty of her occasional investigating hand spelled blindness as clearly as did her patient unseeing eyes," and for my reward that wretched man amused himself by pulling faces at me and trying to break me down in my singing of "Auld Robin Grey," until I was obliged to sing with my eyes tight shut to save myself from laughter; and when the curtain had fallen he said to me: "I'll settle your hash for you some night, young woman, you see if I don't — you just wait now!" And the next season, in

Cincinnati, in very truth, he did "settle my hash" for me, to his great delight and my vexation.

He was so very, very funny as *Major Wellington de Boots* in "Everybody's Friend"; his immense self-satisfaction, his stiff little strut, his martial ardor, his wild-eyed cowardice were trying enough, but when he deliberately acted *at* you — oh, dear! He would look me straight in the eye and make faces at me, until I sobbed at every breath. Then he had a wretched little trick of rising slowly on his toes and sinking back to his heels again, while he cocked his head to one side so like a knowing old dicky-bird that he simply convulsed me with laughter.

I was his *Mrs. Swansdown,* and I had kept steady and never lost a line, until we came to the scene where, as my landlord and would-be husband, he brought some samples of wall-paper for me to choose from. Where, in heaven's name, he ever found those rolls of paper I can't imagine. They were not merely hideous but grotesque as well, and were received with shouts of laughter by the house.

With true shopman's touch, he would send each piece unrolling toward the footlights, while holding up its breadth of ugliness for *Mrs. Swansdown's* inspection and approval, and every piece that he thus displayed he greeted at first sight with words of hearty admiration for its beauty and perfect suitability, until, catching disapproval on the widow's face, he in the same breath, with lightning swift hypocrisy, turned his sentence into contemptuous disparagement, and fairly shook his audience with laughter at the quickness of his change of opinion.

At last he unfurled a piece of paper whose barbarity of design and criminality of color I remember yet. The dead-white ground was widely and alternately striped with a dark Dutch blue and a dingy chocolate brown, and about the blue stripes there twined a large pumpkin-colored morning-glory, while from end to end the brown stripes were solemnly pecked at by small magenta birds.

The thing was as ludicrous as it was ugly — an Indian clay-idol might have cracked into smiles of derision over its artistic qualities.

Then Mr. Owens, bursting into encomiums over its desirability as a hanging for the drawing-room walls of a modest little retreat, caught my frown, and continued: "Er — er, or perhaps you'd prefer it as trousering?" then, delightedly: "Yes — yes, you're quite right, it *is* a neat thing — cut full at the knee, eh? Close at the foot, yes, yes, I see, regular peg-tops — great idea! I'll send you a pair at once. Oh, good Lord! what have I done! I — I — mean, I'll have a pair myself, *Mrs. Swansdown,* cut from this very piece of your sweet selection!"

Ah, well! that ended the scene so far as my help went. The shrieking audience drowned my noise for a time, but, alas, *it* recovered directly, having no hysterics to battle with, while I buried my head deep in the sofa-pillows and rolled and screamed and wept and bit my lips, clinched my hands, and vainly fought for my self-control; while all the time I saw a pair of trousers cut from that awful wall-paper, and Mr. Owens just bulged his white shiny eyes at me and pranced about and rejoiced at my downfall, while the audience, seeing what the trouble was, laughed all over again, and — and — well, "my hash" was very thoroughly "settled," even to the entire satisfaction of Mr. Owens's self.

CHAPTER THIRTY-THIRD

From the "Wild West" I Enter the Eastern "Parlor of Home Comedy"—I Make my First Appearance in "Man and Wife."

THE original Fifth Avenue Theatre was a tiny affair, with but small accommodation for the public and none at all for the actor, unless he burrowed for it beneath the building; and indeed the deep, long basement was wonderfully like a rabbit-warren, with all its net-work of narrow passageways, teeming with life and action. The atmosphere down there was dreadful—I usually prefer using a small word instead of a large one, but it would be nonsense to speak of the "air" in that green-room, because there was none. Atmosphere was there stagnant, heavy, dead, with not even an electric fan to stir it up occasionally, and the whole place was filled with the musty, mouldy odor that always arises from carpets spread in sunless, airless rooms. Gas, too, burned in every tiny room, in every narrow slip of passageway, and though it was all immaculately clean, it was still wonderful how human beings endured so many hours imprisonment there.

It was on a very hot September morning that the company was called together in the green-room of the Fifth Avenue Theatre. This first "call" of the season is generally given over to greetings after the vacation, to chattings, to introductions, to welcomes, and a final distribution of parts in the first play, and a notification to be on hand promptly next morning for work. With a heavily throbbing heart I prepared for the dreaded first meeting with all these strange people, and when I grew fairly choky, I would say to myself, "What nonsense, Mr.

Daly or the prompter will be there, and in the general introductions you will, of course, be included, and after that you will be all right — a smile, a bow, or a kind word will cost no more in a New York theatre than in any other one," which goes to prove what a very ignorant young person I was then. In looking back to that time, I often drop into the habit of considering myself as another person, and sometimes I am sorry for the girl of that day, and say: "You poor thing, if you had only known!" or again, "What wasted trust — what needless sorrow, too!" But I was then like the romping, trusting, all-loving puppy-dog who believes every living being his friend, until a kick or a blow convinces him to the contrary.

I had two dresses, neither one really fit for the occasion, but I put on the best one, braided my mass of hair into the then proper *chatelaine* braids, and found comfort in them, and encouragement in a fresh, well-fitting pair of gloves. At half-past ten o'clock I entered the underground green-room. Two young men were there before me. I slightly bent my head, and one responded doubtfully, but the other, with the blindness of stone in his eyes, bowed not at all. I sat down in a corner — the stranger always seeks a corner; can that be an instinct, a survival from the time when a tribe fell upon the stranger, and with the aid of clubs informed him of their strength and power? Anyway, as I said, I sat in a corner. There was the carpet, the great mirror, the cushioned bench running clear around the room, and that was all — oh, no! on the wall, of course, there hung that shallow, glass-covered frame or cabinet called, variously, "the call-board," the "call-case," or even the "call-box." It is the official voice of the manager — when the "call-case" commands, all obey. There, in writing, one finds the orders for next day's rehearsal; there one finds the cast of characters in the plays; there, too, the requests for the company's aid, on such a day, for such a charity benefit appears. Ah, a great institution is the

"call-case," being the manager's voice, but not his ears, which is both a comfort and an advantage at times to all concerned.

That day I glanced at it; it was empty. The first call and cast of the season would be put up presently. I wondered how many disappointments it would hold for me. Then there was a rustle of skirts, a tapping of heels, a young woman gayly dressed rushed in, a smile all ready for — oh! she nodded briefly to the young men, then she saw me — she looked full at me. The puppy-dog trust arose in me, I was a stranger, she was going to bow, perhaps smile! Oh, how thankful I am that I was stopped in time, before I had betrayed that belief to her. Her face hardened, her eyes leisurely scorched up and down my poor linen gown, then she turned frowningly to the glass, patted her bustle into shape, and flounced out again. I felt as though I had received a blow. Then voices, loudly laughing male voices, approached, and three men came in, holding their hats and mopping their faces. They "bah-Joved" a good deal, and one, big and noisy, with a young face topped with perfect baldness, bowed to me courteously, the others did not see me.

Where, I thought, was the manager all this time? Then more laughter, and back came my flouncy young woman and two of her kind with her; pretty, finely dressed, badly bred women, followed by one whom I knew instantly. One I had heard much of, one to whom I had a letter of introduction — I have it still, by the way. She was gray even then, plain of feature, but sweet of voice and very gentle of manner. I lifted my head higher. Of course she would not know me from sole-leather, but she would see I was a stranger and forlornly alone, and besides, being already secure in her position in the company — she was its oldest member — and therefore, in a certain measure, a hostess, and as my mere presence in the green-room showed I was a professional of some sort or quality, both authority and kindness would prompt her to a bow, a smile, perhaps a pleasant word. I looked hungrily at

her, her bright, small eyes met mine, swept swiftly over me, and then she slowly turned her black silk back upon me, the stranger in her gate; and as I swallowed hard at the lump Mrs. Gilbert's gentle indifference had brought to my throat, my old sense of fun came uppermost, and I said to myself: "No morning is lost in which one learns something, and I have discovered that covering a club neatly in velvet improves its appearance, without in the least detracting from the force of its blow."

And then the passage resounded with laughter and heel-taps, the small room filled full; there was a surging of silken gowns, a mingling of perfumes and of voices, high and excited, and, I must add, affected; much handshaking, many explosive kisses, and then, down the other passageway, came more gentlemen. They were a goodly crowd — well groomed, well dressed, manly fellows, and all in high good-humor, except Mr. Davidge, but, in mercy's name! who ever saw, who would have wished to see "rare old Bill" in a good humor?

Such gay greetings as were exchanged around about and even over me, since my hat was twice knocked over my eyes by too emphatic embracings in such crowded quarters — and still no manager, no prompter. When they quieted down a bit, everyone took stock of me. It would have been a trying position even had I been properly gowned, but as it was the ill-suppressed titters of two extravagantly gowned nonentities and the swift, appraising glances of the others kept me in agony.

Suddenly a quick step was heard approaching. I nearly laughed aloud in all my misery at their lightning-quick change of manner. Silence, as of the grave, came upon them. They all faced toward the coming steps — anxious-eyed, but with smiles just ready to tremble on to their lips at an instant's notice. Never had I seen anything so like trick-poodles. They were ready to do "dead dog," or jump over a chair, or walk on two legs — ready, too, for either the bone or the blow. I knew from their strained attitude of attention who was com-

ing, and next moment, tall and thin and dour, Mr. Daly stood in the doorway. He neither bowed nor smiled, but crossly asked: "Is Miss Morris here?"

Everyone looked reproachfully at everyone else for not being the desired person. Then as the managerial frown deepened, from my corner I lifted a rather faint voice in acknowledgment of my presence, saying: "Yes, sir, I am here," and he gave that peculiar "huh!" of his, which seemed to be a combination of groan and snort, and instantly disappeared again.

Oh, dear! oh, dear! I had felt myself uncomfortable before, but now? It was as if I had sprung up and shouted: "Say! I'm Miss Morris!" Everyone gazed at me openly now, as if I were a conundrum and they were trying to guess me. I honestly believe I should have broken down under the strain in a moment more, but fortunately a slender little man made his silent appearance at one of the doors and took off his immaculate silk hat, revealing the thin, blond hair, the big, pale blue pop-eyes of James Lewis. Twenty minutes ago my heart would have jumped at sight of him, but I had had a lesson. I expected no greeting now, even from a former friend. I sat quite still, simply grateful that his coming had taken the general gaze from my miserable face. He shook hands all round, glanced at me and passed by, then looked back, came back, held out his hand, saying: "You stuck-up little brute, I knew you in aprons and pig-tails, and now you ain't going to speak to me; how are you, Clara?"

While I was huskily answering him, a big woman appeared at the door. Her garments were aggressively rich, and lockets (it was a great year for lockets) dangled from both wrists, from her watch-chain, and from her neck-chain. She glittered with diamonds — in a street-dress which might also have answered for a dinner-dress. I laughed to myself as I thought what a prize she would be for pirates. Then I looked at her handsome face and, as our eyes met, we recognized each other perfectly, but

my lesson being learned I made no sign, I had no wish to presume, and she — looked over my head.

M. Bènot, the Frenchman who died in harness early in the season, poor little gentleman! came in then with the MSS. and the parts of the play, "Man and Wife." Silence came upon the company. As M. Bènot called Mr. or Miss So-and-so, he or she advanced and received the part assigned to them. "Miss Clara Morris!" I rose stiffly — I had sat so long in my corner — and received rather a bulky part. I bowed silently and resumed my seat, but the place was for a moment only a black, windy void; I had seen the name on my part — I was cast for *Blanche*, a comedy part!

As I came back to my real surroundings, M. Bènot was saying: "Eleven o'clock sharp to-morrow, ladies and gentlemen, for rehearsal."

People began hurrying out. I waited a little, till nearly all were gone, whispering "Miss Ethel for *Anne*, Miss Ethel for *Anne*" when the handsome "Argosy of wealth" sailed up to me, and, in a voice of sweet uncertainty, said: "I wonder if you can possibly recognize me?"

"Oh, yes," I answered, smiling broadly, "we recognized each other at the moment you entered, Miss Newton."

She reddened and stammered something about "not being quite sure — and out West, and now here," and as she was even prettier than when I had last seen her, I told her so, and — we were happy ever after.

Then I slipped out of the theatre and crossed to Twenty-first Street safely, but could control my grief and pain, my mortification and my disappointment, no longer. Tears would have their way, and I held my sunshade low before my tear-washed, grieving face. Those little ill-suppressed smiles at my clothes, those slightly lifted eyebrows, and there was not even a single introduction to shelter me to-morrow, and as to *Blanche*, oh, I thought "let her wait till I get home!"

At last mother opened the door for me. I flung the

hat from my aching head, and as she silently tied a wet handkerchief about my throbbing temples, I blurted out three words: "*A comedy part!*" and fell face downward on the bed, and cried until there was not a tear left in me, and considering my record as a shedder of tears, that's saying a good deal. Afterward I knelt down and hid my shamed face in the pillow and asked forgiveness from the ever-pitiful and patient One above, and prayed for a clear understanding of the part entrusted to me. Oh, don't be shocked. I have prayed over my work all my life long, and I can't think the Father despises any labor that is done to His honor. And I humbly gave over my further thought of *Anne,* and praying pardon for the folly of "kicking against the pricks" and wasting my scant strength in useless passion, I retired, at peace with myself, the world, and even *Blanche.*

Next morning a curious thing happened. I heard, or thought I heard, the words: "The first shall be last and the last shall be first," and I called from my bed: "Did you speak to me, mother?" and she answered, "No."

As I sat over my coffee and rolls, I said, absently: "The first shall be last, and the *last* shall be first."

"What do you mean?" mother asked.

"Nothing," I said. "The words were in my ears when I awoke, and they keep coming back to me."

I rose and dressed for rehearsal. As I drew on my gloves I heard a hurried voice asking for me in the hall. I recognized it as M. Bènot's. My heart sank like lead — was even the comedy part to be taken from me? I opened the door. Out of breath, the little man gasped: "I so come quite quick for Monsieur Da-*lay.* He make me to ask you right away, very quick, can you play that part of *Anne?*"

My breath came in gasps, I might have been the runner! I answered, briefly: "Yes!"

"Then," said he, "here give you to me that other part, *Blanche.*"

I gave it joyously.

"Take you now this of *Anne* and make of the great haste to Monsieur Da-*lay's* office, before — *comprenez-vous* — before that you go on the stage, or see anyone else, he want you to make some lies, I tink, so you best hurry!"

"Mother, mother!" I cried. As she ran, I held out to her the part, *Anne Sylvester*, written large on it. She looked, and said: "The last shall be first!" and kissing me, pushed me toward the stairs.

I almost ran in my anxiety to obey orders; my mind was in a state of happy confusion — what could it all mean? The announcement had been distinctly made only yesterday that Miss Agnes Ethel would play *Anne*. Was she ill? Had she met with an accident? And why should Mr. Daly wish to see me privately? Could he be going to ask me to read the part over to him? Oh, dear, heaven forbid! for I could much more successfully fly up into the blue sky.

The stairs that led down from the sidewalk to the stage-door passed across the one, the only, window of the entire basement, which let a modicum of light into a tiny den, intended originally for the janitor's use, but taken by Mr. Daly for his private office. Here the great guiding intelligence of the entire establishment was located. Here he dreamed dreams and spun webs, watching over the incomings, the outgoings, the sayings and the doings of every soul in the company. He would have even regulated their thoughts, if he could. I once said to him, after a rehearsal: "If you could, sir, while in the theatre at least, you would force us all to think only 'Hail, Daly!'"

He laughed a little, and then rather grimly remarked: "That speech made to anyone else would have cost you five dollars, Miss Morris. But if you have absolutely *no* reverence, neither have you fear, so let it pass," and I never said "Thank you" more sincerely in my life, for I could ill afford jests at five dollars apiece.

But that morning of the first rehearsal, as I hurried

down the stairs, the shade was drawn up high, and through the window I saw Mr. Daly sitting, swinging about, in his desk-chair. Before I could tap, he called for me to enter. He was very pale, very rumpled, very tired-looking. He wasted no time over greetings or formalities, but curtly asked: "Can you play *Anne Sylvester?*"

And, almost as curtly, I answered: "Yes, sir!"

The calm certainty of my tone seemed to comfort him; he relaxed his seemingly strained muscles, and sank back into his chair. He passed his long, thin fingers wearily across his closed eyes several times, then, as he opened them, he asked, sharply: "Can you obey orders?"

"Yes," I answered, "I've been obeying orders all my life long."

"Well," he said, "can you keep quiet — that's the thing. Can you keep quiet about this part?"

I stared silently at him.

"This thing is between ourselves. Now, are you going to tell the people all about when you received it?"

I smiled a little bitterly as I replied: "I am hardly likely to tell my business affairs to people who do not speak to me."

He looked up quickly, for I stood all the time, and asked: "What's that, don't speak to you? Were you not welcomed——"

I broke his speech with laughter, but he would not smile: "Were you not properly treated? Who was lacking in courtesy?"

"Oh, please," I hurried, "don't blame anyone. You see there were no introductions made, and of course I should have remembered that the hospitality of the East is more — er — well, cautious than that of the West, and besides I must look very woolly and wild to your people."

"Ah!" he broke in, "then in a measure the fault is mine, since worry and trouble kept me away from the green-room. But Bènot should have made introductions in my place — and — well, I'm ashamed of the women! cats! cats!"

"Oh, no!" I laughed, "not yet, surely not yet!"

Suddenly he returned to the part: "You will tell the people that you were to play *Anne* in the first place."

"But, Mr. Daly," I cried, "the whole company saw me receive the part of *Blanche*."

He gnawed at the end of his mustache in frowning thought. "One woman to whom it belongs refuses the part," he said; "another woman, who can't play it, demands it from me, and I want to stop her mouth by making her believe the part was given to you before I knew her desire for it — do you see?"

Yes, with round-eyed astonishment, I saw that this almost tyrannically high-handed ruler had someone to placate — someone to deceive.

"You will therefore tell the people you received *Anne* last night."

I was silent, hot, miserable.

"Do you hear?" he asked, angrily. "Good God! everything goes wrong. The idiot that was to dramatize the story of "Man and Wife" for me has failed in his work; the play is announced, and I have been up all night writing and arranging a last act for it myself. If Miss Davenport thinks she has been refused *Anne*, she will take her revenge by refusing to play *Blanche*, and the cast is so full it will require all my people — you *must* say you received the part last night!"

"Mr. Daly," I said, "won't you please trust to my discretion. I don't like lying, even for my daily bread, but if silence is golden, a discreet silence is away above rubies."

He struck his hand angrily on the desk before him: "Miss Morris, when I give an order ——"

Up went my head: "Mr. Daly, I have nothing to do with your private affairs; any business order ——"

Heaven knows where we would have brought up had not a sudden darkness come into the little room — a woman quickly passed the window. Mr. Daly sprang to his feet, caught my fingers in a frantic squeeze, and

pushing me from the door rapidly, said: "Yes — yes — well, do your best with it. I'm very glad Bènot found you last night!" Then turning to the new-comer, who had not been present the day before, he cheerfully exclaimed: "Well, you didn't lose to-day's train, I see! I have a charming comedy part for you — come in!"

She went in, and the storm broke, for as I felt my way through the passage leading to the stage-stairs, I heard its rolling and rumbling, and two dimly-seen men in front of me laughed, while one, pointing over his shoulder, toward the office, sneered, meaningly: "Ethel stock is going down, isn't it?"

And almost I wished I was back in a family theatre.

CHAPTER THIRTY-FOURTH

I Rehearse Endlessly — I Grow Sick with Dread — I Meet with Success in *Anne Sylvester.*

UP-STAIRS I found a bare stage, as is often the case for a first mere reading of parts, and most of the company sitting on camp-stools, chatting and laughing. Already M. Bènot had announced the change in the cast, and people looked at me in perfect stupefaction: "Good heavens! what a risk he is taking! Who on earth is she, anyway?" and I cleared my throat in mercy to the speaker, who didn't know I stood behind her.

That morning I was introduced to a number of the ladies and gentlemen, but it was a mere baptism of water, not of the spirit. I was not one of them. Understand, no one was openly rude to me, everyone bowed a "good-morning," but, well, you can bow a good-morning over a large iron fence with a fast-locked gate in it. That my dresses of gray linen or of white linen struck them as being funny in September is not to be wondered at, yet they must have known that necessity forced me to wear them, and that their smiles were not always effaced quickly enough to spare me a cruel pang. And my amazement grew day by day at their own extravagance of dress. Some of the ladies wore a different costume each day during the entire rehearsal of the play. How, I wondered, could they do it? Two of them, Miss Kate Claxton and Miss Newton, had husbands to pay their bills, I found, and Miss Linda Dietz — the gentlest, most sweetly-courteous creature imaginable — had parents

and a home; but the magnificence of the others remained an unsolvable mystery.

Another thing against me was, I could not act even the least bit at rehearsal. Foreign actors will act in cold blood at a daylight rehearsal, but few Americans can do it. I read my lines with intelligence, but gave no sign of what I intended to do at night. Of course that made Mr. Daly suffer great anxiety, but he said nothing, only looked at me with such troubled, anxious eyes that I felt sorry for him. One gentleman, however, decided that I was — not to put too fine a point upon it — "a lunkhead." He treated me with supercilious condescension, varied occasionally with overbearing tyranny. Just one person in the theatre knew that I was really a good actress, of considerable experience, and that was James Lewis; and from a tricksy spirit of mischief he kept the silence of a graven image, and when Mr. Dan Harkins took me aside to teach me to act, Lewis would retire to a quiet spot and writhe with suppressed laughter.

One day he said to me: "Say, you ain't cooking up a huge joke on these gas-balloons, are you, Clara? And upon my soul you are doing it well — you act as green as a cucumber."

And never did I succeed in convincing him that I had not engineered a great joke on the company by deceptive rehearsing. One tiny incident seemed to give Mr. Daly a touch of confidence in me. In the "Inn scene" a violent storm was raging, and at a critical moment the candle was supposed to be blown out by a gust of wind from the left door, as one of the characters entered. They were using a mechanical device for extinguishing the candle, and it was tried several times one morning, and always, to my surprise, from the *right* side of the stage. No one seemed to notice anything odd, though the flame streamed out good and long in the wrong direction before going out. At last I ventured, as I was the principal in the scene: "I beg your pardon, gentlemen, but is it not the wind from the open door that blows that light out?"

Then, quick and sharp, mine enemy was upon me: "This is *our* affair, Miss Morris."

"Yes," I answered, "but the house will laugh if the candle goes out *against* the storm," and Mr. Daly sprang up, and, smiling his first kindly smile at me, said: "What the deuce have we all been thinking of — you're right, the candle must be extinguished from the *left,*" and as I glanced across the stage I saw Lewis doing some neat little dancing steps all by himself.

The rehearsals were exhausting in the extreme, the heat was unnatural, the walk far too long, and, well, to be frank, I had not nearly enough to eat. My anxiety was growing hourly, my strength began to fail, and at the last rehearsals, white as wax from weakness, I had to be carried up the stairs to the stage. Having such a quick study, requiring but few rehearsals, I was from the fourth day ready at any moment to go on and play my part. Fancy, then, what a waste of strength there was in forcing me, day after day, to go over long, important scenes — three, five, even seven times of a morning — for the benefit of one amateur actress, who simply could not remember to-day what she had been told yesterday. It was foolish, it was risking a breakdown, when they had no one to put in my place. Mr. William Davidge was the next greatest sufferer, and as an experienced old actor he hotly resented being called back to go over a scene, again and again, "that a 'walking vanity' might be taught her business at his expense!"

And though I liked and admired the "walking vanity" (who did not in the least deserve the name), I did think the manner of her training was costly and unjust, and one morning, just before the production of the play, I — luckily as it would seem — lost my self-control for a moment, and created a small sensation. In my individual case, fainting is always preceded by a moment of total darkness, and that again by a sound in my ears as of a rushing wind. That morning, as I finished the sixth repetition of *Anne's* big scene with *Lady Glenarm,* the

warning whir was already in my ears, when the order came to go over it again, "that *Mrs. Glenarm* might be quite easy." It was too much — a sudden rage seized upon me: "*Mrs. Glenarm* will only be quite easy when the rest of us are dead!" I remarked as I took my place again, and when I received my cue I whirled upon her with the speech: "Take care, *Mrs. Glenarm*, I am not naturally a patient woman, trouble has done much to tame my temper, but endurance has its limits!"

It was given with such savage passion that Miss Dietz burst into frightened tears and forgot utterly her lines, while a silence that thrilled, absolute, dead, came upon the company for a moment. Hastily I controlled myself, but there were whispers and amazed looks everywhere. Mr. George Brown, who played the pugilist, said aloud to a group: "She's done the whole crowd — she's an actress to the core!"

Mr. Daly sat leaning forward at the prompt-table, white as he could well be. His eyes were wide and bright, and, to my surprise, he spoke quite gently to me as he said: "Spare yourself — just murmur your lines, Miss Morris." And Miss Dietz said: "Oh, Mr. Daly, I am so glad I am prepared; I should have fallen in my tracks if she had done that to me at night, without warning."

When I left the stage, one of the ladies swept her dress aside, and said: "Sit here by me; how tired you must be!" It was the first friendly advance made to me. Before rehearsal ended I overheard the young man with the bald head saying: "She has sold us all, and I bet she will completely change the map of the Fifth Avenue Theatre."

"Oh, no, she won't," answered Lewis, shortly, "she's not that type of woman!"

"Well, at all events, on the strength of that outburst, I ain't afraid to bet twenty good dollars that she makes pie out of Ethel's vogue!" Then, seeing me, he removed his hat hurriedly, offering his shoulder for me to lean

upon as I descended the winding-stairs, and I said to myself: "Yesterday this would have been a kindly service; to-day — to-day it is not far from an humiliation."

Hitherto I had known neither clique nor cabal in a theatre; now I found myself in a network of them. The *favorite* — who, I had supposed, lived only in the historic novel — I now met in real life, and found her as charming, as treacherous, and as troublesome in the theatre as she could ever have been in a royal court. There was no one to explain to me the nature or progress of the game that was being played when I came upon the scene; but I soon discovered there were two factions in the theatre, Miss Agnes Ethel heading one, Miss Fanny Davenport the other. Each had a following, but Miss Ethel, who had been all-powerful, had overestimated her strength when she refused, point-blank, to play *Anne Sylvester*, giving as her reason "the immorality of *Anne*." This from the lady who had been acting all season in "Fernande" and "Frou-Frou" — as a gambler's decoy and an adulterous wife abandoning child and home — satisfactorily proved the utter absence of a sense of humor from her charming make-up.

Mr. Daly, like every other man, could be managed with a little patient *finesse*, but he would not be bullied in business affairs by any living creature, as he proved when, rather than change the play to please the actress he then regarded as his strongest card, he trusted a great part to the hands of an unknown, untried girl, and gave out to the newspapers that Miss Ethel had sprained her ankle, and, though in perfect health, could not walk well enough to act. And, after my momentary outburst, the anti-Ethelites suddenly placed me on one of the sixty-four squares of their chess-board; but I knew not whether I was castle, knight, bishop, or pawn, I only knew that I had become a piece of value in their game, and they hoped to move me against Ethel.

It was all very bewildering, but I had other things to think about, and more important. My money had run

so low I was desperately afraid I could not get dresses for the play, and for the white mousseline necessary for the croquet-party of the first act I was forced to go to a very cheap department store, a fact the dress nightly proclaimed aloud from every inch of its surface. Shawl dresses were the novelty of that season, and at Stewart's I found a modestly priced dark-gray shawl overskirt and jacket that I could wear over a black alpaca skirt for two acts. The other two dresses I luckily had in my wardrobe, and when my new shoes, a long gray veil, and two pairs of gray gloves were laid into the dressing-room basket, I had in the whole world $2.38, on which we had to live until my first week's salary came to me. But, oh, that last awful day before the opening night. I was suffering bodily as well as mentally. I had had an alarming attack of pleurisy. My mother had rung the bell and left a message at the first house that carried a doctor's sign. He came; he was far gone in liquor; he was obstinate, almost abusive — to be brief, he blistered me shockingly; another doctor had to be called to dress and treat the hideous blisters the first had produced; and the tight closing of dress-waists about me was an agony not yet forgotten. But what was that to the nervous terror, the icy chill, the burning fever, the deadly nausea! I could not swallow food — I *could* not! My mother stood over me while, with tear-filled eyes, I disposed of a raw, beaten egg, and then she was guilty of the dreadful extravagance of buying two chops, of which she made a cup of broth, and fearing a breakdown if I attempted without food five such acts as awaited me, she almost forced me to swallow it to the last drop after my hat was on and I was ready to start. I always kiss my mother good-by, and that night my lips were so cold and stiff with fright that they would not move. I dropped my head for a moment upon her shoulder, she patted me silently with one hand and opened the door with the other. My little dog, escaping from the room, rushed to me, leaping against my knees. I caught her up, and

she covered my troubled, veiled face with frantic kisses. I passed her to mother and crept painfully down the steps. I glanced back — mother waved her hand and innocently called: "Good luck! God bless you!"

The astonishing conjunction of superstition and orthodox faith touched my sense of the ridiculous. I laughed aloud, Bertie barked excitedly, I faced about and went forward almost gayly to meet — what? As I reached Broadway, I remember quite distinctly that I said aloud, to myself: "Well, God's good to the Irish, and at all events I was born on St. Patrick's day — so Garryowen forever!"

The pendulum was swinging to the other extreme, I was in high spirits; nor need you be surprised, for such is the acting temperament.

I had not on that first night even the comfort of a dressing-room to myself, but shared one of the tiniest closets with Mrs. Roberta Norwood, in whose *chic* blonde person I failed utterly to see a future friend. The terrible heat, the crowding, the strange companion, all brought back the memory of that far-away first night of all in Cleveland; but now there was no Mrs. Bradshaw to go to for advice or commendation. The sense of utter loneliness came upon me suddenly, and I bent my head low over the buckling of my shoe that my rising tears might not be noticed.

We were directly beneath the auditorium parquet, and every seat flung down by the ushers seemed to strike a blow upon our heads, while applause shook dust into our eyes and hair. Forced occupation is the best cure for nervousness, and in the hurried making-up and dressing I for the time forgot my fright. Two or three persons had come to the door to speak to Mrs. Norwood, and it seemed to me they were all made up unusually pale. I looked at myself in the glass, I hesitated, at last I turned and asked if I wore too much color — if I was too red, and the answer I received was: "That's a matter of taste."

Now it was not a matter of taste, but a matter of business. She was familiar with the size and the lighting of the theatre, and I was not, yet either from extreme self-occupation or utter indifference she allowed me to go upon that tiny stage painted like an Indian about to take the war-path. Truly I was climbing up a thorny stem to reach the flower of success.

The overture was at its closing bars, all were rushing to the stairs for the first act. I stopped behind the dressing-room door and bent my head for one dumbly pleading moment, then muttering "Amen — amen," I, too, hurried up the stairs to face the awful first appearance before a New York audience.

I had always been rehearsed to enter with the crowd of guests. The cue came, and as I stepped forward, a strong hand caught my arm. Mr. Daly had suddenly changed his mind, he held me fast till all were on, then let me go, whispering, "Now — now," and I went on alone.

I had to retire to the back of the stage and wait a few moments till spoken to. Never shall I forget the sort of horror the closeness of the audience caused me, I felt I should step upon the upturned faces; I wanted to put out my hands and push the people back, and their use of opera-glasses filled my eyes with angry tears. Suddenly I understood the meaning of the lightly painted faces. I raised my handkerchief and wiped some of the red from my cheeks, while somewhat bitterly, I am afraid, I thought that "love ye one another" and "thy neighbor as thyself" had been relegated to the garret with "God bless our home."

Then the astonishing beauty of the women on the stage struck me with dismay; their exquisite lacy dresses, their jewel-loaded fingers. Oh! I thought, how can I ever hope to stand with them. I grew sick and cold. Then there dully reached my ears the words of *Lady Lundy:* "I choose — Anne Sylvester." It was my cue. I came slowly down; no one knew me, no one

greeted me. I opened my lips, but no sound came. I saw a frightened look on Miss Newton's face; I tried again, and in a husky whisper, answered: "Thank you; I'd rather not play."

Out in front one actor friend, John W. Norton, watched and prayed for a success for me; when he heard the hoarse murmur, he dropped his head and groaned: "A failure — total and complete!" But I also had noted that hoarse croak, and it had acted like a mighty spur. I was made desperate by it. I threw up my head, and answered my next cue with: "No, Lady Lundy, nothing is the matter; I am not very well, but I will play if you wish it."

I gave the words so bell-clear and with so much insolent humility that a round of applause of lightning quickness followed them. It was the first bit of genuine hearty kindness I had received in the city of New York. In my pleasure I forgot the character of *Anne* completely, and turned to the audience a face every feature of which, from wide, surprised eyes to more widely-smiling lips, radiated such satisfaction and good-fellowship that they first laughed aloud and then a second time applauded.

At last! I was starting fair, we had shaken hands, my audience and I; my nerves were steady, my heart strong, the "part" good. I would try hard, I would do my best. I made my whispered appointment to meet *Geoffrey,* and when I returned and stood a moment, silently watching him, there came upon the house the silence that my soul loves — the silence that might thrill a graven image into acting, and I was not stone.

Our scene began. *Anne,* striving desperately to restrain her feelings, said: "You are rich, a scholar, and a gentleman; are you something else besides all these — *are you a coward and a villain, sir?*"

Clear and distinct from the right box, in suppressed tones, came the words: "Larmes de la voix! larmes de la voix!" Many glanced at the box, a few hissed impatiently at the new mayor, Oakey Hall, who had spoken.

Our interview was interrupted by *Lady Lundy* (Miss Newton) and *Sir Patrick Lundy* (Mr. Lewis). I was dismissed by the first and left the stage. Applause broke forth — continued. Mr. Lewis and Miss Newton began to speak — the applause redoubled. I turned angrily. "What bad manners!" I said. Mr. Daly ran up to me, waving his hands: "Go on! go on! It's you, you fool!"

"I know it," I replied, "but I'm not going to insult any actor by taking a call in the middle of his scene."

"Confound you!" he said, "will you do as I tell you?" He caught me, whirled me about and, putting his hand between my shoulders, literally pitched me on to the stage, where I stood ashamed and mortified by what I honestly felt to be a slight to those two waiting to proceed.

After that the evening's triumph, like the rolling snowball, grew as it advanced. At the end of the quarrel act with *Mrs. Glenarm* the curtain was raised on the stage picture — once, twice, three times. Then M. Bènot said to Mr. Daly: "They want her," and Mr. Daly answered, sharply: "I know what they want, and I know what I don't want — ring up again!"

He did so; no use, the applause went on. Then Mr. Daly said to me: "Take *Mrs. Glenarm* on with you, and acknowledge this call."

We went on together; retired; more applause. Again we went on together; no use, the applause *would* not stop. "Oh, well, ring up once more," said Mr. Daly, "and here, you, take it yourself."

I went on alone, and the audience rose as one individual. I saw them, all blurred through happy tears. I held my hands out to them, with a very passion of love. The house blossomed with white waving handkerchiefs in answer. The curtain fell and, before I moved, rose once more, and then, as I live by bread! I saw pass between me and those applauding people a little crying child carrying a single potato in her hand. Of course that was nerves; but I saw her, I tell you I saw her! and surely I should know myself!

In the fourth act, which was a triumph for all concerned in it — and that meant nearly everyone in the cast — I received a compliment that I prize still. There is a certain tone which should be reserved for short important speeches only in strong and exciting scenes, where, by force of contrast, it has a great effect; so, in tones low, level, clear and cold as ice, *Anne* had scarcely taken her solemn oath: "I swear it, on my honor as a Christian woman, sir!" when from end to end of their railed-in semicircle the musicians broke into swift applause. Catching the effect, their foreign impetuosity made them respond more quickly than could the Americans who seconded their action, while mere recognition from these play-worn, *blasé* men was to me veritable incense. In the last act, Mrs. Gilbert, as *Hester Detheridge*, the supposed dumb woman, proved herself an artist to the finger-tips. Later I saw many *Hesters,* but never one to equal hers.

At last, and late, far too late, the play ended in a blaze of glory. The curtain was raised for final compliments. All the actors in the play had been summoned — we all stood in line, a bowing, smiling, happy line — facing a shouting, hat, handkerchief, or cane-waving crowd of pleased, excited people. As I saw how many eyes were turned my way, with a leap of the heart I repeated: "If you make a favorable impression I will — yes, I will double that salary."

Surely, I thought, no one can doubt that I have made a favorable impression, and, oh, mother, we will be so happy! Just then I caught the eye of a young girl — I could have touched her outstretched hand, she was so close — she gave me a lovely smile, and taking from her bosom a bunch of scarlet carnations she threw them herself. They fell on the stage. One of the actors picked them up and, turning, handed them to *Blanche.* I heard the disappointed "Oh!" and caught her eye again, when, regardless of all the rules and regulations forbidding communication with the audience, I smiled and kissed

my hand to her. As the curtain fell, in an instant everyone was talking with everyone else. I had begun alone — well, I must end alone. I slipped down the staircase least used, and at its foot met Mr. George Brown, who was waiting for me. He took my hands in his and gave me both commendation and congratulation, though they were stayed and braced with unconscious profanity; and I squeezed his hands hard and said: "You are so good, oh! you are so good! but please take care, I'm afraid you'll get forfeited." When he cried: "D—n the forfeit, it's worth a few dollars to speak as you feel sometimes, so good-night!"

I scrambled into my street-clothes, caught up the inevitable bag, and fairly rushed from the theatre, and as I came up from that place of mouldy smell and burnt-out air, and lifted my face to the stupendous beauty of the heavens, sniffing delightedly at the cool, pure night air, suddenly I thought how delicious must have been the first long breath young Lazarus drew when, obeying the Divine command, he "came forth" from the tomb.

Tired, excited, I hurried to carry the news to the two who awaited me — my mother and my dog. At the corner of Twenty-third Street and Broadway I had to pass around a party of ladies and gentlemen who stood talking there, and a lady said as I passed: "No, no! it's Morris, I tell you; see, here it is — Clara Morris." She held up a folded programme, pointing out the name to a gentleman beside her. I laughed happily. Odd bits of the evening's happenings kept appearing before me like pictures. Sometimes I saw the unknown young girl's smiling face — and the scarlet flowers I failed to receive. Sometimes 'twas Mr. Daly's angry one as he pitched me on to the stage to acknowledge a compliment I did not want, great as it was. Most often I saw the faces of the lovely women of the company. What a galaxy of beauty they made! The stately Newton, the already full-blown, buxom Davenport, the tall, slender, deer-eyed Dietz, the oriental Volmer, the auburn-haired

Claxton, the blond Norwood! There were just two women in that company who were not beauties — Mrs. Gilbert and Miss Morris; even they were wholesome, pleasant women, who did not frighten horses by any means, but still if you speak of beauty — why, next! please!

At last I saw the lighted windows that told me home was near. Then up the stairs, where there bounded upon my breast the little black-and-tan bundle of love and devotion, called Bertie the loyal, whose fervid greetings made the removal of my hat so difficult a job that it was through the tangle of hat, veil, and wriggling dog I cried at last: "It's all right, Mumsey — a success! Lots and lots of 'calls,' dear! and, oh! is there anything to eat — *I am so hungry!*"

So, while the new actress's name was floating over many a dainty restaurant supper, its owner sat beneath one gas-jet, between mother and pet, eating a large piece of bread and a small piece of cheese; and, thankful for both, she talked to her small circle of admirers, telling them all about it, and winding up supper and talk with the declaration: "Mother, I believe the hearts are just the same, whether they beat against Western ribs or Eastern ribs!"

Then, supper over, I stumbled through my old-time "Now I lay me," and adding some blurred words of gratitude (God must be so well used to sleep thanks, but very wide-awake entreaties!) I fell asleep, knowing that through God's mercy and my own hard work I was the first Western actress who had ever been accepted by a New York audience, and as I drowsed off, I murmured to myself: "And I'll leave the door open, now that I have opened it — I'll leave it open for all others"

CHAPTER THIRTY-FIFTH

I Am Accepted by the Company — I am Warned against Mr. Fisk — I Have an Odd Encounter with Mr. Gould.

THE following morning we were called to the theatre at eleven o'clock to have the play cut "judiciously," as old actors used to say. It was very loosely constructed, and, besides cutting, the entire drama required a tightening-up, as it were.

Mr. Daly was the first to greet me and offer hearty and genial congratulations. Everyone followed his example, and that morning I was admitted into the family circle and came into my just inheritance of equality and fraternity.

A little surprised, but very happy, I gave back smile for smile, hand-pressure for hand-pressure; for being held off at arm's length by them all had hurt worse I'm sure than they knew, therefore when they offered me kindly greeting I did not stop to study out the *cause* of this *effect*, but shut my eyes and opened my mouth, and took what luck had sent me, and thankfully became so much one of them that I never had a clashing word with a member of the company — never saw the faintest cloud darken our good-fellowship.

That morning, as the cutting was going on, I advanced and offered my part, but Mr. Daly waved me away. "No," he said, "there's plenty of useless matter to take out, but the public won't want *Anne* cut, they have none too much of her now."

He gave but few compliments, even to those he liked, and he did not like me yet, therefore that gracious speech created a sensation among the other hearers and was carefully treasured up by me.

Another of his sayings of that morning I recall. In conversation with one of the ladies, I remarked: "As a Western woman, I suppose I have various expressions to unlearn?" when Mr. Daly turned quickly from the prompt-table, saying, sharply: "Miss Morris, don't say that again. You are a New York woman now — please remember that. You ceased to be a Westerner last night when you received the New York stamp."

I thought him jesting, and was about to make some flippant reply, when one of the ladies squeezed my arm and said: "Don't, he will be angry; he is in earnest."

And he was, just as he was in earnest later on when we had become good friends, and I heard him for the first time swear like a trooper because I had been born in Canada. And when I laughed at his anger, he was not far from boxing my ears.

"It's a damn shame!" he declared; "in the first place you are an American to the very marrow of your bones. In the next place you are the only woman I know who has a living, pulsing love of country and flag! Oh, the devil! I won't believe it — you born in a tu'penny ha'-penny little Canadian town under that infernal British flag! See here, if you ever tell anyone that — I'll — I'll never forgive you! Have you been telling that to people?"

I answered him: "I have not — but I have permitted the assertion that I was born in Cleveland to go uncorrected," and, with the sweet frankness of friendship, he answered that I had more sense than he had given me credit for. But, small matter that it was, it annoyed him greatly, and I still have notes of his, sent on my birthdays, in which he petulantly refers to my unfortunate birth-place, and warns me to keep silent about it.

Like many other great men — and Mr. Daly was a great man — he often made mountains out of mole-hills, devoting to some trifle an amount of consideration out of all proportion to the thing considered.

On the first night of the season Mr. Daly had said to

me: "One word, Miss Morris, that I had forgotten before — Mr. James Fisk, unfortunately, as landlord, has the right of entrance into the green-room. He doesn't often appear there, but should he come in, if you are present I desire you should instantly withdraw. I do not wish you to be introduced to him under any circumstances."

I felt my face flushing red as I answered: "I have no desire to meet either Mr. Fisk or any other gentleman in the green-room!" But Mr. Daly said, hurriedly: "Don't misunderstand me, there's no time for explanations now, only do as I ask you. You will recognize him when I tell you he is very blond and very like his pictures," and away flew Mr. Daly to attend to things enough to drive most men crazy.

Now, that speech did not mean that Mr. Fisk was a monster of ill-breeding or of immorality, but it did mean that that was Mr. Daly's "tat" to Mr. Fisk's "tit" in a very pretty little "tit-for-tat" quarrel between them.

Mr. Daly very seldom tasted defeat — very, very seldom came out second best in an encounter; but there had been a struggle anent the renting of the theatre: Mr. Fisk, as landlord, refusing to renounce his right of entrance by the stage-door to any theatre he owned — nothing could move him, no argument, no entreaty, no threat; not even an offer of more rent than he himself asked. To Mr. Daly the right of entrance of an outsider back of the stage was almost unbearable, even though the privilege was seldom used and never abused. He declared he would not sign any agreement holding such a clause. He gave up the theatre rather than yield, and then, with a large company already engaged, he sought in vain for a house to shelter it. Now, the city is broken out all over, close and fine, with theatres, like a case of well-developed measles; but then 'twas different. Mr. Daly could find no other theatre, and he was compelled to accept the Fifth Avenue with the hated clause compromised thus: Mr. Fisk was to have the right of en-

trance to the green-room, but was never to go upon the stage or behind the scenes; an ending to the struggle that pleased the company mightily, for they were all very fond of Jimmy Fisk, or "The Prince," as he was called.

He never forgot them on benefit nights; whether the beneficiary was man or woman there was always a gift ready from the "Railroad Prince."

He looked like a man well acquainted with his tub. His yellow hair crisped itself into small waves right from its very roots. His blue eyes danced with fun, for he was one of nature's comedians. His manner was what he himself would describe as "chipper." No one could talk five minutes with him without being moved to laughter.

His own box was the right upper one, and as I first had him pointed out to me, yellow-haired, laughing, flashing now and then a splendid ring, I wondered if he really was the stalking-horse of the dark little man with the piercing eyes who sat for one act well back of the redundant and diffuse Mr. James Fisk. Wishing to make sure of the dark man's identity, I asked who he was. "Oh," was the answer, "he's gone now, but I suppose it was Gould, rooting out the 'Prince' to talk shop to him!" then, thrusting out a contemptuous under-lip, my informant added: "He's no good — he has nothing to do with the theatre! Scarcely ever comes to a performance, and doesn't see anything when he does. He couldn't tell any one of us apart from the others if he tried — and he's not likely to try. You want to keep your eye on Jimmie. If he likes you, you're in for flowers and a present, too, on your benefit!"

Imagine, then, my amazement on the third night of the season when this occurred: In one act I made my exit before the curtain fell — all the other characters being still upon the stage. Having a change of dress there, I always hurried down-stairs as quickly as possible, and passing in one door and out of the other, crossed the green-room to reach my dressing-room. That evening

as I ran in I saw a gentleman standing near the opposite door. I turned instantly to retreat, when a voice called: "If you please." I paused, I turned. The gentleman removed his hat, and coming to the centre of the room held out his hand, saying: "Miss Morris — you *are* Miss Morris?"

I smiled assent and gave him my hand. His small, smooth fingers closed upon mine firmly. We stood and looked at each other. He was small, and dark of hair and of beard, and his piercing eyes seemed to be reading me through and through. He spoke presently, in a voice low and gentle — almost to sadness.

"I wanted to speak to you," he said; "I'm not going to waste time telling you you are a wonderful actress, because the papers have already done that, and all New York *will* do it, but I see you are an honest girl and alone here ——"

"No — oh, no!" I broke in, "my mother, too, is here!"

A faint smile seemed to creep about his bearded lips, there was a distinct touch of amusement in his voice as he said: "I-n-d-e-e-d! a valiant pair, no doubt — a truly valiant pair! but," his small fingers closed with surprising strength about mine in emphasis of his words, "but, oh, my honest little woman, you are going to see trouble here!" He glanced down at the hateful cheap dress I wore, he touched it with the brim of his hat: "Yes, you will have sore trouble on this score, to say nothing of other things; but don't let them beat you! When your back is to the wall, don't give up! but at a last pinch turn to me, Clara Morris, and if I don't know how to help you out, I know somebody who will! She ——"

Steps, running steps, were coming down the passageway, then tall, dead-white with anger, Mr. Daly stood in the doorway. He almost gasped the words: "What does this mean, sir?" then angrily to me: "Leave the room at once!"

Flushing at the tone, I bent my head and moved toward

the door, when, calm and clear, came the words: "Good-night, Miss Morris, please remember!"

Mr. Daly seemed beside himself with anger. "Mr. Gould," he cried (my heart gave a jump at the name; to save my life I could not help glancing back at them), "how dare you pass the stage-door? You have no more right here than has any other stranger! Your conduct, sir ——"

The gray, blazing eyes of the speaker were met by Mr. Gould's, calm, cold, hard as steel, and his voice, low and level, was saying: "We will not discuss my conduct here, if you please — your office perhaps," as I fled down the entry to my own room.

Mr. Daly sent for me at the end of the play to demand my story of the unexpected meeting. Had I received any note, any message beforehand? Had we any common acquaintance? What had he said to me — word for word, what had he said?

I thought of the gentle voice, the piercing eyes that had grown so kind, the friendly promise, and somehow I felt it would be scoffed at — I rebelled. I would only generalize. He had called me an honest girl, had said the city praised me; but when I got home I told my mother all, who was greatly surprised, since she had had only the newspaper Gould in her mind — a sort of human spider, who wove webs — strong webs — that caught and held his fellow-men.

His words came true. I saw trouble of many kinds and colors. More than once I thought of his promise, but I had learned much ill of human nature in a limited time, and I was afraid of everyone. Knowing much of poor human nature now, and looking back to that evening, recalling every tone, every shade of expression, I am forced to believe Mr. Jay Gould was perfectly honest and sincere in his offer of assistance.

If this incident seems utterly incredible at first, it is because you are thinking of Mr. Gould wholly in his character of "The Wizard of Wall Street;" but turn to

the domestic side of the man, think of his undying love for, his unbroken loyalty and devotion to, the wife of his choice, who, as mother of his little flock, never ceased to be his sweetheart.

Is it so improbable, then, that his heart, made tender by love for one dear woman, sheltered and protected, might feel a throb of pity for another woman, unsheltered and alone, whose poverty he saw would be a cruel stumbling-block in her narrow path? I think not.

Who that "she" was whose aid he would have asked in my behalf I do not know, can never know; but it always gives me an almost childish pleasure to imagine it was the sweet, strong woman who was his wife. At all events, Mr. Gould that night furnished me with a pleasant memory, and that is a thing to be thankful for.

The first time I saw Mr. Fisk in the green-room he was surrounded by a smiling, animated party, and as he advanced a step, expectantly, I disappeared. I have been told that he laughed at his own disappointment and the suddenness of some claim upon my attention. The second time, I was in the room when he entered, and at my swift departure he reddened visibly, and, after a moment, said: "If you were not all such good friends of mine, I should think someone had been making a bugaboo of me to scare that young woman."

"Oh," laughed one of the men, "she's from the West and is a bit wild yet."

"Well," he replied, "it doesn't matter where she's from, New York's got her now and means to keep her. I'd like to offer her a word of welcome and congratulation, but she won't give a chap any margin," and he resumed his conversation.

The third time, he was alone in the room, and as I backed hastily out he followed me. I ran — so did he — but as that was too ridiculous I stopped at his call and, turning, faced him. He removed his hat and hurriedly said: "I beg your pardon for forcing myself upon your attention, Miss Morris, but any man with a grain

of self-respect would demand an explanation of such treatment as I have received from you. Come now, you are a brave girl, an honest girl — tell me, please, why you avoid me as if I were the plague. Why, good Lord! your eyes are all but jumping out of your head! Are you afraid even to be seen listening to me?" Suddenly he stopped, his own words had given him an idea. His eyes snapped angrily. "Well, I'll be blessed!" he exclaimed; then he came closer. He took my hand and asked: "Miss Morris, have you been putting these slights on me by order?"

I was confused, I was frightened; I remembered the anger Mr. Gould's presence had aroused, and this was an actual breech of orders. I stammered: "I — oh, I just happened to be busy, you know."

I glanced anxiously about me; he replied: "Yes, you were very busy to-night, sitting in the green-room doing nothing — yet you ran as if I were a leper. Tell me, little woman — don't be afraid — have you been obeying an order?"

"If you please — if you please!" was all I could say.

He looked steadily at me, lifted my hand to his lips, and said, with a compassionate sigh: "Bread and butter comes high in New York, doesn't it, child? There, I won't worry you any longer, but Brother Daly and I will hold a little love-feast over this matter." And with a laugh he returned to the green-room, where I could hear him singing "Lucy Long" to himself.

A fortnight later, finding him again surrounded by the company, he laughingly called out to me: "Don't run away, the embargo is raised. It won't cost you a cent to shake hands and be friendly!" And as I seated myself in the place he made beside him, he added, low: "And no advantage taken of it outside the theatre."

He used so many queer, old-fashioned words, such as "chipper," "tuckered," "I swan!" "mean tyke," etc., that I once said to him: "I'm afraid you have washed your face in a pail by the pump ere this, Mr. Fisk?"

He laughed, and responded: "I'm afraid I used to be sent back to do it better, when I had first to break the ice to get to the water in the pail, Miss Guesswell!"

And then he gave a funny imitation of a boy washing his face in icy water, by wetting his fingers and drawing a circle about each eye and his mouth. He called his wife Lucy. Heaven knows whether it really was her name, but he always referred to her as Lucy. He was very fond of her, in spite of appearances, and proud of her, too. He said to me once: "She is no hair-lifting beauty, my Lucy, just a plump, wholesome, big-hearted, commonplace woman, such as a man meets once in a lifetime, say, and then gathers her into the first church he comes to, and seals her to himself. For you see these commonplace women, like common-sense, are apt to become valuable as time goes on!"

When anyone praised some wife, he would look up and say: "Wife — whose wife? What wife? Bring your wives along, I ain't afraid to measure my Lucy with 'em. For, look here, you mustn't judge Lucy by her James!"

A divorce case was before the courts, and it was much discussed everywhere. The wife had been jealous and suspicious, and blond hairs (she was very dark herself) and strange hair-pins held a ludicrous prominence in the evidence. "Ah!" said Fisk, "that's not the kind of a wife I have! Never, *never* does Lucy surprise me with a visit, God bless her! No, she always telegraphs me when she's coming, and I — I clear up and have a warm welcome for her, and then she's pleased, and that pleases me, and we both enjoy our visit. Hang'd if we don't! And just to show you what a hero — yes, a *hero* — she is, and, talking of hair-pins, let me tell you now. You know those confounded crooked ones, with three infernal crinkles in the middle to keep them from falling out of the hair? Those English chorus-girls wear them, I'm told. Well, one day Lucy comes to see me. Oh, she had sent word as usual, and everything was cleared up (I supposed) as usual, and George, my man,

was laying out some clothes for me, when Lucy, smoothing her hand over the sofa-cushion, picks up and holds to the light an infernal crinkled hair-pin. George turned white and looked pleadingly at me. I saw myself in court fighting a divorce like the devil; and then, after an awful, perspiring silence, my Lucy says — she that has worn straight pins all her life: 'James, that *is* a lazy and careless woman that cares for your rooms. It's three weeks to-day since I left for home, and here is one of my hair-pins lying on the sofa ever since!'

"If she had put it in her hair I should have thought her really deceived in the matter, but when she dropped it in the fire, I knew she was just a plain hero! I walked over and knelt down and said: 'Thank you, Lucy,' while I pretended to tie her shoe. George was so upset that he dropped the studs twice over he was trying to put into a shirt-front. Oh, I tell you my Lucy can't be beat!"

The time he won the name of "Jubilee Jim," when the whole country was laughing over his triumphant visit to Boston with his regiment, he made this unsmiling explanation of the matter:

"You see, the Ninth and I were both tickled over the invitation to visit Boston, and as there were so many of us I paid the expenses myself. Being proud of the regiment and anxious it should be acquainted with all real American institutions, I arranged for it to stay over Sunday, for there were dozens of the boys who had never even seen a slice of real Boston brown-bread or a crock-baked bean — and a Boston Sunday breakfast was to be the educational feature of the visit. Everything was lovely, until the Ninth suddenly felt a desire to pray, as well as to eat, and I'll be switched on to a side-track if the minister of that big church didn't begin to kick like a steer, and finally refuse to let us pray in his shop. Now, if there's anything that will make a man hot as blazes in a minute, it's choking him off when he wants to pray. Some sharply pointed and peppery words were exchanged on the subject. I suppose our numbers rather muddled

up his schedule, but if he'd said so quietly I could have straightened out his heavenly time-table so that there would have been no collision between trains of prayer. But no, instead of that, he slams the doors of his church in our visiting faces, and, in act at least, tells us to go to — what's that polite word now that means h—? What — what do you call it *sheol?* Shucks! that word won't become popular — hasn't got any snap to it! Well, the boys were mighty blue, they thought the visit was off. But I got 'em into the armory, and I said, what amounted to this, I says: 'This visit ain't off; Boston is right as a trivet, and wants us! We ain't bucking against the city, but against that sanctified stingyike who don't want anyone in heaven but his own gang; but you see here, when the Ninth Regiment wants to pray, I'm d—d if it don't do it. Who cares for that church, anyway, where you'd be crowded like sardines and have your corns crushed to agony! We'll go to Boston, boys, and we'll praise the Lord on the Common, if they'll let us, and if they won't, we'll march out to the suburbs and have a perfect jubilee of prayer!' And what do you think," he cried, grinning like a mischievous boy, as he twisted the long, waxed ends of his mustache to needle-like points, "what do you think — we prayed out of doors, with all female Boston and her attendants looking on and saying *amen;* and, oh, by George! I sent a man to see, and 'stingyike's' church was nearly empty! Ha! ha! I tell you what it is, when a New York soldier wants to pray, he prays, or something gives!" After that he was Jubilee Jim.

His growing stoutness annoyed him greatly, yet he was the first to poke fun at what he called his "unmilitary figure." One evening I said: "Mr. Fisk, I'm afraid you have cast too much bread upon the waters; it's said to be very fattening food when it returns?"

"Well, I swan!" he answered, "I'll never give another widow a pass over any road of mine — whether she's black, mixed, or grass, for that's about all the bread-casting I do."

This was not true, for he was very kind-hearted and generous, especially to working people who were in trouble. His "black widow" was one in full mourning, his "mixed widow" was the poor soul who had only a cheap black bonnet or a scanty veil topping her ordinary colored clothing to express her widowed state, while the "grasses" were, in his own words: "All those women who were not married — but ought to be."

Whenever he gave a diamond or an India shawl to a French opera-bouffe singer the world heard of it, and the value grew and grew daily, and that publicity gratified his strange distorted vanity, but the lines of widows, sometimes with hungry little flocks hanging at their skirts, that he passed over roads, the discharged men he "sneaked" (his own word) back into positions again, because of their suffering brood, he kept silent about.

He never got angry at the papers, no matter what absurdity they printed about him. At the time of the riot some paper declared he had left his men and had climbed a high board fence in order to escape from danger. In referring to the article at the theatre one evening, he said, in reproachful tones: "Now wasn't that a truly stupid lie?" He rose, and placing his hands where his waist should have been, he went on mournfully: "Look at me! I look like a sprinter, don't I? If you just could see me getting into that uniform — no offence, ladies, I don't mean no harm. Oh, Lord, who has a small grammar about them? Well, when I'm in the clothes, it takes two men's best efforts, while I hold my breath, to clasp my belt — and they say I climbed that high fence! Say, I'd give five thousand dollars down on the nail if I had the waist to do that act with!"

He was not only a natural comedian, but he had an instinct for the dramatic in real life, and he was quick to grasp his opportunity at the burning of Chicago. *His* relief train must be rushed through first — *he* must beg personally; and then — and then, oh, happy thought! all the city knew the value he placed upon the beautiful

jet black stallion he rode in the Park. Out, then, he and his stall-mate came — splendid, fiery, satin-coated aristocrats! And taking their places before a great express wagon, went prancing and curvetting their way from door to door, Mr. Fisk stopping wherever a beckoning hand appeared at a window. And bundles of clothing, boxes of provisions, anything, everything that people would give, he gathered up with wild haste, and brief, warm thanks, and rushed to the express offices for proper sorting and packing. Of course that personal service was not really necessary. A modest man would not have done it, but he was spectacular. His act pleased the people, too, and really many were moved to give by it. Their fancy was caught by the picture of the bediamonded Jubilee Jim placing himself and his valuable horses at the service of the terror-stricken, homeless Chicagoans.

Though he was himself the butt of most of his jokes, he often expressed his opinions in terms as conclusive and quite as funny as those of his world-famous reply to the sanctimonious fence-committee, who, claiming that the laying of his railroad had destroyed the greater part of the old fence about a country graveyard, demanded that he should replace it with a new one. Scarcely were the words out of their lips than, swift as a flash, came the characteristic answer: "What under heaven do you want a fence round a graveyard for? The poor chaps that are in there can't get out, and, I'll take my Bible oath, those that are out don't want to get in! Fence around a graveyard! I guess not; I know a dozen better ways of spending money than that!"

I heard much of his generosity on benefit nights, but personally I never tested it. Before my benefit night arrived, Mr. Edward Stokes had caught Mr. Fisk on a walled-in staircase, as in a trap, and had shot him down, and then, in that time of terror and excitement, Jubilee Jim proved that whatever else he had been called — man of sin, fraud, trickster, clown — he was *not* a coward!

With wonderful self-control he asked, as the clothing was being cut from his stricken body: "Is this the end of me; am I going to die, doctor?"

And when the man addressed made an evasive and soothing answer, that his hopeless eyes contradicted, James Fisk testily continued: "I want to know the truth!" Then, more gently: "I'm not afraid to die, doctor, but *I am* afraid of leaving things all at sixes and sevens! This is the end of me, isn't it? Well, do what you can, and, George, send for —— and for —— [his lawyers], and I will do what I can. When can Lucy get here?"

And so he quickly and calmly made all possible use of his ebbing strength — of the flying moments — disproving at least one charge, that of cowardice. He was dying, and crowds were waiting about the hotel where he lay, hungry for any morsel of news from the victim's bedside. That was the situation as I went to the theatre. I dressed and went through one act, then, as I came upon the stage in the second act, I faced Mr. Fisk's private box. I glanced casually at it, and stopped stock-still, the words dying on my lips. A shiver ran over me — someone had entered the box since the first act and had lowered the heavy red curtains and drawn them close together.

No one could fail to understand. The flood of light, the waves of music reached to the edge of the box only — within were silence, darkness! The laughing owner would enter there no more, forever!

With swelling throat I stood looking up. Another actor entered, saw the direction of my eyes, followed it, and next moment tears were on his cheeks. Then people in the house, noticing our distress, glanced in that same direction, and here and there a man rose and slipped out. Here and there a handkerchief was pressed to a face, for without a word being spoken all knew, by the blank, closed box, that Mr. Fisk was dead.

I never knew a more trying evening for actors, for all knew him well — liked him and grieved for him. I was

the only mere acquaintance, yet I was deeply moved and found it hard to act as usual before that mute, blank box — hard as though the body of its one-time owner lay within.

So he made his exit — dramatic to the last. A strange character — shrewd, sharp, vain, ostentatious, loving his diamonds, velvet coats, white gloves. The monumental silver water-pitchers in his private boxes were too foul to drink from generally, but then the public could see the mass of silver. A bit of a mountebank, beyond a question, but with a temper so sunny and a heart so generous that in spite of all his faults Jubilee Jim had a host of friends.

CHAPTER THIRTY-SIXTH

A Search for Tears — I Am Punished in "Saratoga" for the Success of "Man and Wife" — I Win Mr. Daly's Confidence — We Become Friends.

THE people who have known happiness without the alloying *if* or *but* are few and far between. "Yes, of course we are happy — but," "I should be perfectly and completely happy — *if*," you hear people saying every day; and so in my case, having been admitted into fellowship with the men and women of the company, who were a gracious and charming crowd, and receiving hearty approval each night from the great Public, by whose favor I and mine existed, I was grateful and would have been quite happy — *but* for a brand-new difficulty that suddenly loomed up, large, and wide, and solid before me.

Never in my life had I been in a play of a longer run than one week. Imagine, then, my misery when I found this play, that was already old to me at the end of the first week, was likely to go on for a long time to come. It was not mere *ennui* over the repetition of the same lines, night after night, that troubled me, it was something far more serious. I had made my hit with the public by moving the people's feelings to the point of tears; but to do that I had first to move my own heart, for, try as I would, no amount of careful acting had the desired effect. *I* had to shed tears or *they* would not. Now that is not an easy thing to do to order, in cold blood. While the play is new one's nerves are strained almost to the breaking point — one is over-sensitive and the feelings are easily moved; then the pathetic words I am speaking touch my heart, tears rush to my eyes,

tears are heard in my voice, and other hearts respond swiftly; *but* when you have calmed down, when you have repeated the lines so often that they no longer mean anything to you, what are you to do then?

Really and truly there were days when I was nearly out of my mind with terror lest I should not be able to cry that night; for those tears of mine had a commercial value as well as an artistic, and Mr. Daly was swift to reproach me if the handkerchief display in front was not as great as usual. This sounds absurd perhaps to a reader, but heaven knows it was tragic enough to me. I used to agonize all day over the question of tears for the night, and I have seen the time when even my own imaginary tomb failed to move me.

One night, when my eyes were dry as bones, and my voice as hard as stone, and Mr. Daly was glaring whitely at me from the entrance, I had suddenly a sort of vision of that dethroned actress whom, back in Cleveland, I had seen uncrowned. I saw her quivering face, her stricken eyes, and a sudden rush of tears blinded me. Later, Mr. Daly said: "What a tricky little wretch you are. I thought you were going to throw that scene away, without a single tear to-night. I suppose you were doing it to aggravate me, though?"

Goodness knows I was grateful enough myself for the tears when they did come, and I got an idea from that experience that has served me all the years since. Everything else — love, hate, dignity, passion, vulgarity, delicacy, duplicity, all, everything can be assumed to order; but, for myself, tears are not mechanical, they will not come at will. The heart must be moved, and if the part has lost its power then I must turn to some outside incident that *has* power. It may be from a book, it may be from real life — no matter, if only its recalling starts tears to weary eyes.

Thus in "Alixe" it was not for my lost lover I oftenest wept such racing tears, but for poor old *Tennessee's partner* as he buried his worthless dead, with his honest

old heart breaking before your eyes. While in "Camille" many and many a night her tears fell fast over the memory of a certain mother's face as she told me of the moment when, returning from the burial of her only child, the first snowflakes began to whirl through the still, cold air, and she went mad with the anguish of leaving the little tender body there in the cold and dark, and flung herself from the moving carriage and ran, screaming, back to the small rough pile of earth to shelter it with her own living body.

So there is my receipt for sudden tears. I being — thank heaven — a cheerful body, and given to frequent laughter, may laugh in peace up to the last moment, if I have only stowed away some heart-breaking incident that I can recall at the proper moment. It seems like taking a mean advantage of a tender heart, I know — what Bret Harte would call "playing it low down" on it; but what else could I do? I leave it to you. What could *you* do to make yourself cry seven times a week, for nine or ten months a year?

Then there was another great change in the new life. I was used to rehearsing every day, and, lo! when once a play was on here, there followed weeks, perhaps months, when there were no rehearsals. Mercy! I could never afford to waste all that time; but what could I do? "One *and* two *and* three *and*," I could not afford; but, oh, *if* I could take some French lessons, *what* a help they would be to me in the proper pronunciation of names upon the stage. But I did not want lessons from some ignorant person, or someone who had a strange dialect. I have all my life had such a horror of *unlearning* things. I knew a real French teacher would charge me a real "for-true" price, and my heart was doubtful — but see how fate was good to me. There was in Tenth Street a little daughter of a well-known French professor — he taught in a certain college. The daughter was eager to teach. The father said: "Who will trust so young a girl to instruct them? If you only had a first and second pupil,

you would be self-supporting. French teachers are in great demand, but where shall you find that first pupil — tell me that, *ma fille*. No matter how small your charge, the question will be, where have you taught? No one will wish to be the first pupil."

But, fine old French gentleman as he was, he was mistaken nevertheless, for I was willing, nay, eager, to be that first pupil, and she found my name of so much value to her in obtaining a full class that she became absolutely savage in her fell determination to make me speak her beloved language correctly. In spite of her eighteen years she looked full fourteen, and her dignity was a fearful thing to contemplate, until she had a chocolate-cream in one cheek and a dimple in the other, then somehow the dignity broke in the middle and the lesson progressed through much laughter.

She was not beautiful, but pretty and charming to such an extent that, within the year, she became Madame, carried her own chocolates, and was absolutely vicious over irregular verbs. Dear little woman — I remember her gratefully, and also remember that, later on, I paid just six times as much per lesson to an elaborate person, well-rouged, who taught me nothing, lest she might offend me in the act. I know this to be true, because one day I deliberately mispronounced and let tenses run wild, to see if she would have the honesty or courage to correct me; but she looked a trifle surprised, rearranged her bangles, and let it all pass. I then resigned my position as pupil, that she might give her very questionable assistance as teacher to some other scholar, shorter of temper, and more sensitive to rebuke or correction than I was.

At the theatre I think everyone liked me well enough, save Mr. Daly. He disliked me because I simply could not learn to treat him with reverence. I had the greatest admiration for him, I showed him respect by obeying him implicitly, but if he was funny I laughed, if he gave me an opportunity to twist his words absurdly I accepted it as gleefully as if he had been the gas-man.

But two things happened, and lo! my manager's attitude toward me changed completely. Mr. Daly was convinced that no man or woman could bear decently a sudden success. He was positive that no head could stand it. When I made no demand for my promised increase of salary, but went pinching along as best I could, he only said to himself: "She will be all the worse when her head does begin to turn."

One day a certain newspaper man looked in at his office, and said: "Oh, I have something here about the play, and I've given a few pretty good lines to your *find* (Clara Morris): do you want to look at them?"

"I want them cut out!" sharply ordered Mr. Daly.

"Cut out?" repeated the surprised man. "Why, she's the play — or mighty near it. I thought you'd want her spoken of most particularly?"

And then Mr. Daly made his famous speech: "I don't want individual successes, sir, in my theatre! I want my company kept at a level. I put them all in a line, and then I watch, and if one head begins to bob up above the others, I give it a crack and send it down again!"

I had heard that story in several forms, when one day I spoke of it to Mr. Daly, and he calmly acknowledged the speech, as I have given it above, adding the words: "And next week I'm going to give Mr. Crisp's head a crack, he's bobbing up, I see!"

The play of "Saratoga," by Mr. Bronson Howard, had been read to the company, and, after the custom of actors the world over, they began to cast the characters themselves — such a part for Lewis, such a one for Miss Davenport. The splendid Irish part for Amy Ames (of course, with her wonderful brogue), etc.; almost everyone remarking that there was nothing for me. Lewis said: "Well, Clara, you're out of this play, sure. Will you study Greek or the Rogue's Vocabulary? for I'll wager a hat to a hair-pin you'll be turning a good head of hair gray over some nonsense of the kind — good Lord!"

For M. Bènot was holding toward me a thin little part, saying: "For you, Miss Morris."

Mr. Daly stood at the far end of the room; he was watching me. The part was a walking lady of second quality. It was an indignity to give it to me. Like lightning I recalled the terms of my contract — I realized my helplessness.

I rolled up the small part, calmly rose, and smiling a comprehending smile into Mr. Daly's disappointed eyes, for which he could have choked me, I sauntered out of the room. At home I wept bitterly. It was undeserved! I had borne so much from gratitude, and here I was being treated just as a fractious, brain-turned, presuming person might have been treated for a punishment. However, my tears were only seen at home. At the theatre I rehearsed faithfully and good-temperedly, and writhed smilingly at the expressions of surprise over the cast, and for one hundred nights I was thus made to do penance for having made a success in "Man and Wife." Truly I had got a good "crack" for bobbing up; still my patient, uncomplaining acceptance of the part had made an impression on Mr. Daly, and he often expressed his regret, later on, for the error he made as to the possible turning of my head.

Then came the second happening. To Mr. Daly a confidant was an absolute necessity of existence. If they had tastes in common, so much the happier for Mr. Daly, but such tastes were not imperatively demanded, neither was sex of importance — male or female would answer; but the one great, indispensable, and essential quality was the ability to respect a confidence, the power to hold a tongue.

In the early weeks of the season he had been drifting into a friendship with a man in the company, and had told him, in strictest confidence, of a certain plan he was forming, and twenty-four hours later he heard that plan being discussed in one of the dressing-rooms. It had traveled by way of husband to wife, wife to friend, friend

to her husband, and husband No. 2 was busy in explaining it to all and sundry.

That ended the career of one gentleman as friend and confidant to Mr. Daly. One day after rehearsal I was detained on the stage to discuss a fashion-plate he was tearing from a magazine. A short poem caught his eye. He glanced at it carelessly, then looked more closely at the lines, and began to mumble the words:

"She of the silver foot — fair goddess — "

His brows were knit, his eyes looked away, dreamily. Again he repeated the words, adding, impatiently: "I can't place that silver foot — the bow, the lyre, yes; but the foot? Oh, probably it's a mere figure of speech," and he turned to the plate again, when I said: "Perhaps it means *Thetis,* you know, silver-footed queen — daughter of old sea-god."

His whole face lit up with pleasure. "That's it," he said, "that's whom it means; but are you sure the word 'queen' belongs right there?"

"No," I laughed, "I have grave doubts about my 'queen,' but I'm solid as a rock on the rest of the line."

Then he repeated, with lingering enjoyment: "'Thetis, silver-footed, *silver-footed,* daughter of old sea-god.' Do you know I often wonder why someone does not make a play of mythological characters — a play after the modern method I mean."

"Oh," I broke in, "then I shall have a rest, for I am not beautiful enough for even a walking-lady divinity."

"Ah," he said, kindly, "you are not going to do any more walking ladies — divine or human. I have already in my possession a play with a great part for you. Boucicault wrote it, and ——"

He stopped suddenly, all the brightness went out of his face. He played nervously with his watch-guard. He started out with: "Miss Morris, I wish —" stopped, frowned; then impatiently took up the picture-plate,

pointed out which dress he wanted me to wear, and curtly dismissed me.

I understood him perfectly. In a genial moment he had unintentionally given me some information which he now regretted, though he would not stoop to ask my silence; and he felt sure that I would at once boast of the great part that was to be mine; and I went home, one broad smile of malicious satisfaction, for in spite of my seemingly-careless speech, I had, by long and careful training, acquired the fine art of holding my tongue about other people's affairs, even though I ascended to the roof to babble to the city of my own; and Mr. Daly would be again disappointed, as he had been the day I accepted, without protest, the walking-lady part.

That night he barely nodded in silent recognition of my "Good-evening, sir." Next morning he kept his eyes averted from me when he gave me any stage directions; but whenever or wherever we women formed a little group to chat, there Mr. Daly, like a jack-in-the-box, suddenly sprang into evidence. It was very funny — he was simply waiting for me to repeat my interesting information.

Two, three days passed, then a certain kindness began to show in his manner toward me. Quite suddenly, and of course unasked, he gave me a dressing-room to myself. I was delighted! Hesitatingly, I tapped at the door of his office. I had never stood there before, save by order. I said: "I will not come in, Mr. Daly, I only wished to thank you for the room you have given me. It will be a great comfort, for we are terribly crowded in the other one."

But he rose, took my hand, and said: "You deserve anything and everything this theatre can provide for you." Drawing me to a chair, he placed me in it, while still speaking: "And I am proud of you. You are a girl in ten thousand! for you can respect a confidence."

I was very much embarrassed by such unexpected warmth, and laughing nervously I said: "Even

when the confidence was unintentional and deeply regretted?"

"Ah!" he answered, "you saw that, did you? Well, I've been listening and waiting to hear about the 'new play' ever since, but not a word have you dropped, and I did not ask for silence either. You are a woman worth talking to, and I shall never be afraid to tell you things I am going to do, and ——"

And straightway he told me all about the new play — its good points, its bad ones, and where he feared for it; and to show you how true was his judgment, the play, which later on gave me a great personal success, was itself a failure from the very causes he then indicated.

And so it came about that Mr. Daly, putting aside his dislike for me — coming to enjoy my sense of the ridiculous, instead of resenting it — confided many, many plans and dreams, likes and dislikes, hates and loves to me. We quarreled spitefully over politics, fought furiously over religion, wickedly bowed down and worshipped before odds and ends of lovely carvings or precious *cloisonné*, to whose beauty I first introduced him, and hung in mutual rapture over rare old engravings.

Thus I came to know him fairly well. A man with unbounded ambition, a man of fine and delicate tastes, with a passionate love of beauty — in form, color, sound. I have known him to turn a sentence, exquisitely, word by word, slowly repeating the line, as though he were tasting its beauty, as well as hearing it. Interested in the occult and the inscrutable — a man of many tastes, but of one *single purpose* — every power and acquirement were brought to the service of the stage.

In love he was mutability personified. In friendship, always exigent. Now sullenly silent, now rapidly talkative, whimsical, changeable, he was ever lavishly generous and warm-hearted. And it is a comfort to know that in one respect at least I proved satisfactory during the friendship that lasted as long as I remained in the theatre, since I never, even by chance, betrayed his confidence.

When we had finally parted, a man one day mentioned me to Mr. Daly, expecting to bring forth some disparaging remark. There was a pause while my former manager gazed out at the heavily falling rain, then he said, quietly: "When you drop a thing in a well, it can go no further. Clara Morris is a sort of human well, what you confide to her goes no further. Some people call that 'discretion,' I call it loyalty. I — I guess you'll get a wetting on the way home." And acting on that hint the surprised gentleman withdrew. He told me himself of the occurrence, and I confess that Mr. Daly's words gave me a thrill of pleasure.

After those two occurrences I found my theatrical life pleasanter, for I love my kind and wish to live at peace with them — and Mr. Daly's dislike had disturbed and distressed me; therefore, when that had been conquered, great was my contentment. A sympathetic word, a comprehending glance, a friendly smile, proving ample indemnification for former injuries.

Nor could I be made to accept at full value the cruel gibes, the bitter sarcasms reported to me as coming from Miss Agnes Ethel. For some reason there was a distinct effort made to arouse in me an enmity against that lady. Unpleasant stories had been repeated to me during the run of "Man and Wife"; some of them had wounded me, but I had only listened silently. Then one night I met her — a slender, auburn-haired, appealing creature, with clinging fingers, sympathetic voice, and honest eyes — a woman whose charming and cordial manner not only won my admiration, but convinced me she was incapable of the brutalities charged to her.

So when "Jezebel" was announced, and it was known that Mr. Daly desired Miss Ethel and me both to appear in it, great interest was aroused, only to be crushed by Miss Ethel's refusal to play the part allotted to her. I think she was in error, for the two parts were perfectly balanced. Mine was the wicked, even murderous adventuress; hers the gentle, sweet, and triumphant wife. I

had the first act; she was not in that, but Mr. Daly's idea was that her victory in the last act — where I was simply pulverized for my sins — evened things up. But Miss Ethel listened to the advice of outside friends. Her relations with Mr. Daly were already strained, and her second refusal of a part was the beginning of the end.

Mr. Daly himself informed me that she said her part was secondary, but that the real difficulty sprang from an earlier wrangle between them, with which I had nothing to do. Yet there were persons who, with great indignation, informed me that Miss Ethel had positively "refused to appear upon the stage in any play with me — a mere vulgar outsider!"

But "vulgar outsider" was just a touch too strong; "malice had o'erleaped self" and fallen on the other side. The silly story even reached some of the papers, but that did not increase my belief in its truth.

Mr. Daly and Miss Ethel parted company before, or at, the end of the season, and while I never worked with her, later on I privately received such gracious courtesies from her kindly hands that the name of Agnes Ethel must ever ring pleasantly in my ears

CHAPTER THIRTY-SEVENTH

A Study of Stage-Management — I Am Tricked into Signing a New Contract.

BEFORE I came under the management of Mr. Daly, I may say I never really knew what stage-management meant. He was a young man then; he had had, I believe, his own theatre but one season before I joined his forces, yet his judgment was as ripe, his decisions were as swift and sure, his eye for effect was as true, his dramatic instinct as keen as well could be.

We never exchanged so much as a frown, let alone a hasty word, over work. I realized that he had the entire play before his "mind's eye," and when he told me to do a thing, I should have done it, even had I not understood why he wished it done. But he always gave a reason for things, and that made it easy to work under him.

His attention to tiny details amazed me. One morning, after Mr. Crisp had joined the company, he had to play a love-scene with me, and the "business" of the scene required him to hold me some time in his embrace. But Mr. Crisp's embrace did not suit Mr. Daly — no more did mine. Out he went, in front, and looked at us.

"Oh," he cried, "confound it! Miss Morris, relax — relax! lean on him — he won't break! That's better — but lean more! lean as if you needed support! What? Yes, I know you don't need it — but you're in love, don't you see? and you're not a lady by a mile or two! For God's sake, Crisp, don't be so stiff and inflexible! Here, let me show you!"

Up Mr. Daly rushed on to the stage, and taking Crisp's place, convulsed the company with his effort at acting

the lover. Then back again to the front, ordering us to try that embrace again.

"That's better!" he cried; "but hold her hand closer, tighter! not quite so high — oh, that's too low! Don't poke your arm out, you're not going to waltz. What in —— are you scratching her back for?"

It was too much; in spite of the awe in which Mr. Daly was held, everyone, Crisp included, screamed with laughter, while Mr. Daly fumed and fretted over the time that was being wasted.

One of my early experiences of his way of directing a rehearsal made a deep impression upon me. In the play of "Jezebel" I had the title part. There were a number of characters on in the scene, and Mr. Daly wanted to get me across the stage, so that I should be out of hearing distance of two of the gentlemen. Now, in the old days, the stage-director would simply have said: "Cross to the Right," and you would have crossed because he told you to; but in Mr. Daly's day you had to have a *reason* for crossing the drawing-room, and so getting out of the two gentlemen's way — and a reason could not be found.

Here are a few of the many rejected ideas: There was no guest for me to cross to in welcoming pantomime; no piano on that side of the room for me to cross to and play on softly; ah, the fireplace! and the pretty warming of one foot? But no, it was summer-time, that would not do. The ancient fancy-work, perhaps? No, she was a human panther, utterly incapable of so domestic an occupation. The fan forgotten on the mantel-piece? Ah, yes, that was it! you cross the room for that — and then suddenly I reminded Mr. Daly that he had, but a moment before, made a point of having me strike a gentleman sharply on the cheek with my fan.

"Oh, confound it, yes!" he answered, "and that's got to stand — that blow is good!"

The old, old device of attendance upon the lamp was suggested; but the hour of the day was plainly given

by one of the characters as three o'clock in the afternoon.

These six are but few of the many rejected reasons for that one cross of the stage; still Mr. Daly would not permit a motiveless action, and we came to a momentary standstill. Very doubtfully, I remarked: "I suppose a smelling-bottle would not be important enough to cross the room for?"

He brightened quickly — clouded over even more quickly: "Y-e-e-s! N-o-o! at least, not if it had never appeared before. But let me see — Miss Morris, you must carry that smelling-bottle in the preceding scene, and — and, yes, I'll just put in a line in your part, making you ask some one to hand it to you — that will nail attention to it, you see! Then in this scene, when you leave these people and cross the room to get your smelling-bottle from the mantel, it will be a perfectly natural action on your part, and will give the men their chance of explanation and warning." And at last we were free to move on to other things.

Above all was he eager to have his stage present a home-like interior. Never shall I forget my amazement when I first saw a piece of furniture occupying the very centre of the stage, while I with others were reduced to acting in any scrap of room we could "scrooge" into, as children say.

Long trains were fashionable then, and it was no uncommon sight to see the lover standing with both feet firmly planted upon his lady's train while he implored her to fly with him — the poor man had to stand somewhere! Miss Davenport, in one of her comedy scenes, having to move about a good deal on the crowded stage, finally wound her trailing skirts so completely about a chair that, at her exit, the chair went with her, causing a great laugh.

One night a male character, having to say boastfully to me: "I have my hand upon a fortune!" I added in an undertone: "And both feet upon my white satin dress!" at which he lost his grip (as the boys say) and laughed aloud — said laugh costing him a forfeit of fifty

cents, which really should have been paid by me, as I was the guilty cause of that disastrous effect. But the gentleman was not only gallant but well used to being forfeited, and unconcernedly paid the penalty exacted.

But really it was very distressing trying to make your way between pieces of furniture — stopping to release your skirts from first one thing and then another, and often destroying all the effect of your words by such action. One evening I petulantly observed to Mr. Daly: "I see now why one is only *woolly* in the West — in the East one gets the wool all rubbed off on unnecessary pedestals and centre-divans."

He laughed first, then pulled up sharply, saying: "Perhaps you did not notice that your comment contained a criticism of my judgment, Miss Morris? If I think the furniture necessary, that is sufficient," and I gave him a military salute and ran down-stairs. At the foot Mr. George Brown and one of the pretty young women stood. She was saying: "Now if any of *us* had said there was too much crowding from that rubbishy old furniture, he would have made us pay a nice forfeit for it, but Miss Morris gets off scot-free!"

"Yes, I know," said Mr. Brown, "but then she amused him first with the idea of rubbing the Western wool off here, and you can't very well laugh and then turn around and forfeit the person who made you do it."

And so I learned that if no detail was too small for Mr. Daly to consider carefully in his preparation of a play, so no detail of daily life in his theatre was too small for notice, consideration, and comment, and I resolved to try hard to curb my careless speech, lest it get me into trouble.

Early during that first week my friend, John Norton, said to me: "Have you spoken to Mr. Daly about your salary yet?"

"Good gracious, no!" I answered.

"Well, but you should," he persisted; "that is only business. You have made a great hit; he promised you to double thirty-five dollars if you made a favorable impression."

"Well," I cried, "wait till salary-day, and very likely I'll get it; he will keep his word, only, for mercy's sake, give him a chance! It would insult him were I to remind him, now, of his promise."

I was content to wait, but Mr. Norton was anxious. Monday came and, tremblingly, I opened my envelope to find thirty-five dollars — no more, no less. I knew what anyone else would do, I knew I was valuable to Mr. Daly, but, oh, those years and years of repression — for so long a time *to be seen — not heard,* had been the law of my weary life, and now the old thrall was upon me, I simply could not demand my right.

The tears fell fast as I went home, with that miserable wage in my hand. We were in such dreadful straits for clothing. Other needs we could hide, but not the need of outer garments. I was quite sick with disappointment and anxiety, yet I would not permit Mr. Norton to go and speak for me, as that would mean gossip as to his right to interfere.

I used to plan out exactly what I was going to say, and start a little earlier to the theatre, that I might have time to see Mr. Daly and remind him of his promise, and then, when I got there, unconquerable shame overcame me — I *could* not!

Then one night Mr. Daly asked me to sign a contract for five years, with a certain rise in salary each year. I utterly refused. I knew that would mean absolute bondage. He said he would raise my salary now, if I would sign; and I did actually whisper, that he had not kept his promise about this year's salary.

He curtly answered: "Never mind this year — sign for five, and this season will then take care of itself!"

"No," I said, and yet again "No!" "Mr. Daly," I cried, "I shall be grateful to you all the days of my life for giving me this chance in New York — you are treating me badly, but I am grateful enough not to rebel. I will play for you every season of my life, if you want me; I will never consider an offer without first telling you of it, but you must engage me but for one season at a time."

"Then you can go!" he said. "All my people are engaged from three to five years — I will not break my rule for anyone; so now you can choose!"

"Pardon me," I answered, huskily, "you chose for me when you told me to go!" I bowed to him and went out, sore at heart and deeply wounded, for I was keeping silent as to his broken promise out of sheer gratitude for the opening he had given me.

The letter-box for the company hung near his private office. One night, as he unlocked his door, he saw old man Keating (the stage-door man) sorting out letters for the various boxes. One caught Mr. Daly's eye, bearing the name of Wallack. He took it from Keating's hand; it was addressed to Clara Morris. No one ever called Mr. Daly a dull man, and when he put two and two together, even in a hurry, he knew quite well that the result would be four; and when he put the words, "Wallack's Theatre," and the address, "Clara Morris," together he knew equally well the result would be an offered engagement. Then Mr. Daly put back the letter and said sharply to the reverent Keating: "Whatever you do, don't let Miss Morris pass you when she comes in. Stop her before she takes her key. Remember, whether early or late, stop her anyway, and send her to my room. Tell her it is urgent — you understand? Before she gets her key (by the letter-box) I *must* see her!"

Yes, he understood, for when I came in I was switched away from the key-board in a jiffy and rushed by the elbow to the governor's office, and even held there until the summons to enter answered the knock of the determined and obedient Keating.

Inside, Mr. Daly, smiling benignly, greeted me as one greets a naughty, spoiled child, and pulling me by my fingers toward his desk, showed me a contract outspread: "A contract for *one* season," he said, giving me a light tap on my ear. "Though you must promise silence on the subject, for there would be an outcry of favoritism if it were known that I broke a rule for you! Salary? oh, the

salary is only fifty-five dollars, but we will balance that by my assistance in the matter of wardrobe. Whenever you have five dresses to buy I will provide three, which will belong to me afterward, of course — and — and just sign now, for I'm in a great haste, child, as I have an appointment to keep! Oh, you don't want any time to think over an engagement of just one season! You obstinate little block! and, by the way, I'll add five dollars a week to your present salary for the rest of the season, if you sign this—yes, that's the right place!"

So pinched, so tormented were we for money that I signed instantly to secure that immediate poor little five dollars a week rise! Signed and went out to find, awaiting me in the letter-box, a better offer from Mr. Lester Wallack.

And let me say right here that about the middle of the season I found that some young actresses, who handed me cards on the stage, and in laced caps and aprons appeared as maids in my service, were receiving for their arduous duties a higher salary than I received as leading woman and their play-mistress. "It's a strange world, my masters, a very strange world!"

CHAPTER THIRTY-EIGHTH

I Go to the Sea-shore — The Search for a "Scar" — I Make a Study of Insanity, and Meet with Success in "L' Article 47."

I HAD got safely through my first dreaded vacation. I had had two wonderful weeks at the seaside, where, with Mr. and Mrs. James Lewis and George Parkes, I had boarded with Mrs. By Baker, whom we left firmly convinced of our general insanity — harmless, but quite hopeless cases she thought us. Awed into reverent silence I had taken my first long look at the ocean; that mighty monster, object of my day-dreams all the years, lay that day outstretched, smiling, dimpling, blinking like the babe of giants, basking in the sun.

I had inhaled with delight the briny coolness of its breath, and with my friends had engaged in wild romps in its waves, all of us arrayed meanwhile in bathing dresses of hideous aspect, made from gray flannel of penitential color and scratchiness, and most malignant modesty of cut; which were yet the eminently proper thing at that time.

I almost wonder, looking at the bathing dresses of today, that old Ocean, who is a lover of beauty, did not dash the breath out of us, and then fling us high and dry on the beach, where the sands might quickly drift over our ugly shells and hide them from view.

All this happened, and much more, before I came to the play "L'Article 47," famous for its great French court scene, and for the madness of its heroine. I am so utterly lacking in self-confidence that it was little short of cruelty for Mr. Daly to tell me, as he did, that the fate of the play hung upon that single scene; that the production

would be expensive and troublesome, and its success or failure lay absolutely in my hands.

I turned white as chalk, with sheer fright, and could scarcely force myself to speak audibly, when asked if I could do the part.

I answered, slowly, that I thought it unfair for Mr. Daly first to reduce me to a state of imbecility, through fear, and then ask me to make a close study of violent madness — since the two conditions were generally reversed.

The people laughed, but there was no responsive smile on my lips, as I entered upon a period of mental misery that only ended with the triumphant first night.

I did all I could do to get at *Cora's* character and standing before the dread catastrophe — feeling that her madness must to some extent be tinged by past habits and personal peculiarities. I got a copy of the French novel — that was not an affectation, but a necessity, as it had not then been translated, and I was greatly impressed with the minute description of the destruction done by the bullet *George* had fired into her face. Portions of the jaw-bone had been shot away; the eye, much injured, had barely been saved, but it was drawn and distorted.

As the woman's beauty had been her letter of introduction to the gilded world, indeed had been her sole capital, that " scar " became of tremendous value in the make-up of the part, since it would explain, and in some scant measure excuse, her revengeful actions.

Still, as the play was done in Paris, the " scar " was almost ignored by that brilliant actress, Madame Rousseil. I had her photograph in the part of *Cora*, and while she had a drapery passed low beneath her jaws to indicate some injury to her neck or breast, her face was absolutely unblemished.

To my mind that weakened *Cora's* case greatly — she had so much less to resent, to brood over.

I took my trouble to Mr. Daly, after I had been out to the mad-house at Blackwell's Island, and had gained some

useful information from that awful aggregation of human woe. He listened to Bèlot's description of *Cora's* beauty and its wrecking "scar"; he looked condemningly at the Rousseil picture, and then asked me what I wanted to do.

I told him I wanted a dreadful scar — then I wanted to veil it always; and he broke in with, "Then why have the scar, if it is to be veiled?"

But I hurried on: "My constant care to keep it covered will make people imagine it a hundred times worse than it really is. Then when the veil is torn off by main force, and they catch a glimpse of the horror, they will not wonder that her already-tottering brain should give way under such a blow to her vanity."

Mr. Daly studied over the matter silently for a few moments, then he said: "Yes, you are right. That scar is a great factor in the play; go ahead, and make as much of it as you can."

But right there I came up against an obstacle. I was not good at even an eccentric make-up. I did not know how to proceed to represent such a scar, as I had in my mind.

"Try," said Mr. Daly. I tried, and with tear-reddened eyes announced my failure, but I said: "I shall ask Mr. Lemoyne to help me — he is the cleverest and most artistic maker-up of faces I ever saw."

"Yes," said Mr. Daly, "get him to try it after rehearsal; you have no time to lose now!"

Only too well I knew that; so at once I approached Mr. Lemoyne, and made my wants known. I had not the slightest hesitation in doing so, because, in spite of his sinful delight in playing jokes on me, he was the kindest, most warm-hearted of comrades; and true to that character he at once placed his services at my disposal, though he shook his head very doubtfully over the undertaking.

"You know I never saw a scar of such a nature in my life," he said, as he lighted up his dressing-room.

"Oh," I said, "you, who can change your nose or your mouth or your eyes at will, can make an ugly scar, easily enough," and off went hat and veil, and Mr. Lemoyne, using my countenance for his canvas, began work.

He grew more and more glum as he wiped off and repainted. One scar was too small — oh, much too small. Then the shattered jaw-bone was described. Again he tried. "Clara," he said, "I can't do it, because I don't know what I am aiming at!"

"Oh, go on!" I pleaded, "make a hideous scar, then I'll learn how from you, and do it myself."

He was patience and kindness personified, but when at last he said he could do no more, I looked in the glass, and — well, we both laughed aloud, in spite of our chagrin. He said: "It looks as though some street-boy had given you a swat in the eye with a chunk of mud."

I mournfully washed it off and begged him to try just once more — to-morrow; and he promised with a doleful air.

I had tears in my eyes as I left the theatre, I was so horribly cast down, for if Mr. Lemoyne could not make up that scar no one could. But he used too much black — that was a grave mistake, and — oh, dear! *now* what? Men were peeling up the stone walk. I could not go home by the Sixth Avenue car as usual, without a lot of bother and muddy shoes. I was just tired enough from rehearsal and disappointed enough to be irritated by the tiniest *contretemps*, and I almost whimpered, as I turned the other way and took a Broadway car. I dropped into a corner. Three men were on my side of the car. I glanced casually at them, and, "Goodness mercy!" said I to myself, "what are they gazing at — they look fairly frightened?"

I followed the direction of their eyes, and, I gasped! I felt goose-flesh creeping up my arms! On the opposite side sat a large and handsome mulatto woman, a small basket of white linen was on her knees, her face was turned toward the driver, and oh, good God! not so long ago, her throat had been cut almost from ear to ear!

The scar was hideous — sickening, it made one feel faint and frightened, but I held my quivering nerves with an iron hand — here was my scar for *Cora!* I must study it while I could. It had not been well cared for, I imagine, for the edges of the awful gash were puckered, as though a gathering thread held them. There was a queer, cord-like welt that looked white, while the flesh either side was red and threatening; and then, as if she felt my eyes, the woman turned and faced me. A dull color rose slowly over her mutilated throat and handsome face, and she felt hastily for a kerchief, which was pinned at the back of her dress-collar, and drew the ends forward and tied them.

I kept my eyes averted after that, but when I left the car weariness was forgotten. I stopped at a druggist's shop, bought sticking-plaster, gold-beaters' skin, and absorbent cotton, and with springy steps reached home, materials in hand, model in memory — I was content, I had found my scar at last!

If you are about to accuse me of hardness of heart in using, to my own advantage, this poor woman's misfortune, don't, or at least wait a moment first.

When I had gone through the asylum's wards and the doctor had called my attention to this or that exceptional case and had tried to make clear *cause* and *effect;* when I had noted ophidian's stealth in one and tigerish ferocity in another, I suddenly realized that to single one of these unfortunates out, then to go before an indifferent crowd of people and present to them a close copy of the helpless afflicted one, would be an act of atrocious cruelty. I could not do it! I would instead seize upon some of the general symptoms, common to all mad people, and build up a mad-scene with their aid, thus avoiding a cruel imitation of one of God's afflicted.

So in this scar I was not going exactly to copy that riven throat, but, with slender rolls of cotton, covered and held by gold-beaters' skin, I was going to create dull white welts with angry red spaces painted between —

with strong sticking-plaster attached to my eyelid, I was going to draw it from its natural position. Oh, I should have a rare scar! yet that poor woman might herself see it without suspecting she had given me the idea.

Oh, what a time of misery it was, the preparation of that play! Poor Mr. Daly — and poor, poor Miss Morris!

You see everything hung upon the mad-scene. Yet, when we came to that, I simply stood still and spoke the broken, disjointed words.

"But what are you going to do at night?" Mr. Daly cried. "Act your scene, Miss Morris."

Act it, in cold blood, there, in the gray, lifeless daylight? with a circle of grinning, sardonic faces, ready to be vastly amused over my efforts? He might better have asked me to deliver a polished address in beautiful, pellucid Greek, to compose at command a charming little *rondeau* in sparkling French, or a prayer in sonorous Latin — they would have been easier for me to do, than to gibber, to laugh, to screech, to whisper, whimper, rave, to crouch, crawl, stride, fall to order in street-clothes, and always with those fiendish "guyers" ready to assist in my undoing. Yet, poor Mr. Daly, too! I was sorry for him, he had so much at stake. It *was* asking a good deal of him to trust his fate entirely, blindly to me.

"Oh!" I said, "I would if I could — do please believe me! I want to do as you wish me to, but, dear Mr. Daly, I can't, my blood is cold in daylight, I am ashamed, constrained! I cannot act then!"

"Well, give me some *faint* idea of what you are going to do," he cried, impatiently.

"Dear goodness!" I groaned, "I am going to try to do all sorts of things — loud and quiet, fast and slow, close-eyed cunning, wide-eyed terror! There, that's all I can tell about it!" and I burst into harassed tears.

He said never another word, but I used to feel dreadfully when, at rehearsals, he would rise and leave the stage as soon as we reached the mad-scene.

Then it happened we could not produce the play on Monday. An old comedy was put on for that one night. I was not in it, and Mr. Daly, seeing how near I was to the breaking-point with hard work and terror, tried to give me a bit of pleasure. He got tickets for my mother and me, and sent us to the opera to hear Parepa and Wachtel. I was radiant with delight; but, alas, when did I ever have such high spirits without a swift dampening down. Elaborately dressed as to hair, all the rest of my little best was singularly plain for the opera. Still I was happy enough and greatly excited over our promised treat.

Mother and I set out to go to Miss Linda Dietz's home, where we were to pick her up, and, under escort of her brother, go over to the Academy of Music. We could not afford a carriage, so we had to take one of the 'busses then in existence. Mr. Daly had sent me, with my box tickets, a pair of white gloves, and with extreme carefulness I placed them in my pocket, drawing on an old pair to wear down to Fifteenth Street, where I would don the new ones at Miss Dietz's house. How I blessed my forethought later on!

Long skirts were worn, so were bustles. A man in the omnibus was in liquor; he sat opposite me, right by the door. I signaled to stop. Mother passed out before me — I descended. The man's feet were on my dress-skirt. I tried to pull it free — he stupidly pulled in the door. The 'bus started — I was flung to the pavement!

I threw my head back violently to save my face from the cobbles, my hands and one knee were beating the cruel stones. Mother screamed to the driver, a gentleman sprang to the horses, stopped them, picked me up, and even then had to thrust the drunken man's feet from my torn flounce. I had faintly whispered: "My glass — my fan!" and the gentleman, placing me in mother's arms, went out into the street and found them for me. I sat on a bench in the Park: I was shaken and bruised and

torn and muddy, but I would not go home — not I, I was going to hear Parepa and Wachtel!

The gentleman simply would not leave us; he gave me his arm to Miss Dietz's house, and I needed its aid, for each moment proved I was worse hurt than I had at first thought. There, however, when with my heartiest thanks we parted from our good Samaritan, the Dietz family, with dismayed faces, received us. They were kindness personified. I was sponged and arnicaed and plastered and sewed and brushed, and at last my ankle's hurt being acknowledged, it was tightly bound. The new white gloves safely came forth, and "Dietzie and Morrie" (our nicknames for each other) set forth, with brother Frank and mother in attendance, and arrived at the crowded Academy just as the curtain rose. We went quite wild with delight over the old moss-draped "Il Trovatore." I broke my only handsome fan — applauding. Suddenly "Dietzie" saw me whiten — saw me close my eyes. She thought it was the pain of my ankle, but it was a sudden memory of *Cora* and the mad-scene. As the whirlwind of applause roared about me, I sickened with a mortal terror of the ordeal awaiting me. I hope I may always thrust Satan behind me with the whole-hearted force I used in thrusting "L'Article 47" behind me on that occasion. I returned to "Il Trovatore." I enjoyed each liquid jewel of a note, helped to raise the roof, afterward declined supper, hastened home, romped my dog, and put her to bed. Got into a dressing-gown, locked myself in my room, and had it out with *Cora*, from A to Z. Tried this walk and that crouch; read this way and that way. Found the exact moment when her mind began to cloud, to waver, to recover, to break finally and irretrievably. Determined positively just where I should be at certain times; allowed a margin for the impulse or inspiration of the moment, and at last, with the character crystal-clear before me, I ended my work and my vigil.

After turning out the gas I went to the window and looked at the sky. The stars had gone in; low down in

the east a faint, faint band of pink held earth and sky together. I was calm and quite ready to rest. All my uncertainty was at an end. What the public would do I could not know; what I would do was clear and plain before me at last.

Poor Mr. Daly! I sighed, for I knew *his* anxiety and uneasiness were not allayed. Bertie, tired of waiting for me, had curled her loving little body up in my pillow — a distinct breach of family discipline. A few moments later, feeling her small tail beating a blissful tattoo on my feet, I muttered, laughingly: "A little prayer, a little dog, and a little rest," and so sank into the sound sleep I so desperately needed, in preparation for the ever-to-be-dreaded first night of "L'Article 47" of the French Penal Code.

The house was packed. Well-known people were seen all through the theatre. Act I. represented the French Court with a trial in full swing — it played for one hour, lacking three minutes. I was on the stage ten minutes only. I was told Mr. Daly shook his head violently at the curtain's fall.

The next act I was not in at all, but it dragged, and when that was over Mr. Daly's peculiar test of public feeling showed the presence of disappointment. Like many other managers, he often placed men here and there to listen to the comments made by his patrons, but his quickest, surest way of judging the effect a new play was making, was by watching and listening at the very moment of the curtain's fall. If the people instantly turned to one another in eager speech, and a bee-like hum of conversation arose, he nodded his head with pleased satisfaction — he knew they were saying, "How lovely!" "That was a fine effect!" "We've had nothing better for a long time!" "It's just divine!" "It's great!" etc.

When they spoke slowly and briefly, he shook his head; but when they sat still and gazed steadily straight ahead of them, he called a new play for rehearsal next morning.

That second act had made him shake his head; the

third came on with *Cora's* rejected love, her strangling tears of self-pity, her whirlwind of passion, ending with that frantic and incredible threat. The people caught at it! I suppose the swiftness of its action, the heat and fury following so close upon the two slow, dull acts, pleased and aroused them. The curtain went up and down, up and down, call after call, and when at last it was allowed to remain down, myriads of bees might have been swarming in front, and Mr. Daly, nodding and smiling as I rushed past on my way to change my gown, said: "Hear 'em — hear the bees buzz — that's good! Now if only you ——"

I waited not for the rest — too well I knew how to complete the sentence: "If only I could safely hive those swarming bees" for him. Could I? Oh, could I? for the moment was at hand, the "mad-scene," so dreaded, so feared!

Three things I had counted upon to help my effects: the crouch, the laugh, the scar. The crouch had just done splendid service at the end of Act III. Would the other two be as effective?

I went up to the stage; I was to be discovered lying on a lounge. Miss Davenport, magnificently handsome in person and gown, beside me; the others at the gambling-table. As she took my hand she gave a sharp little cry: "Heavens!" she said, "you might be dead, you are like ice!" She touched my forehead, asking, "Are you ill? Why, your head is burning, hot! hot! hot! Mr. Daly, just touch her hands and head!"

He looked down on me in silence; two pairs of frightened eyes met; he gave a groan; threw out his hands helplessly; stepped off the stage, and signaled the curtain up on what was to make or break the play — and he knew no more what to expect than did one of the ushers out in front.

Under cover of the music and the applause accompanying the curtain's rise, I caught myself muttering, vaguely: "The power and the glory — the power and the glory,"

and knew that involuntarily I was reaching out for the old staff on which I had leaned so many times before.

The scene was on — the laughing cynicism of the *Baroness* — the chatter of the players — then, at last, *George* and *Cora* were alone!

My terror had slipped from me like a garment, I was in the play once more; save for just one awful moment! *George* had torn the veil from my disfigured face, and, casting in my teeth the accusation: "You are mad!" had left me there alone, standing, stunned by the word! That was the moment of actual dethronement of reason, and, as I slowly, stupidly turned my eyes, I saw Mr. Daly's white face thrust forward eagerly. His gray eyes wide and glowing, his thin hand tightly grasping the lapel of his coat, his whole being expressing the very anguish of anxiety!

One moment I felt I was lost! I had been dragged out of the play at the crucial moment! I clasped my hands across my eyes: "The kingdom and the power!" I groaned — I faced the other way! The low, eerie music caught my attention and awakened my imagination, in another second I was as mad as a March hare. The first time the low, gibbering laugh swelled into the wild, long-sustained shrieking *ha! ha!* a voice said, low and clear: "Oh, dear God!"

Yet I who had heard the genuine laugh at the madhouse knew this to be but a poor, tame, soulless thing, compared to that Hecate-like distillation — the very essence of madness, that ran through that real gibber of laughter.

Yet it was enough. At the end there came to me one of those moments God grants now and then as a reward for long thirst, way-weariness, and heart-sickness patiently borne! One of those foolishly divine moments you stand with the gods and, like them, are young and fair and powerful! Your very nerves thrill harmonious, like harp-strings attune — your blood courses like quicksilver for swiftness, like wine for warmth, and on that fair peak

of Triumph, where one tarries but by moments, there is no knowledge of sin or suffering, of death or hate; there is only sunshine, the sunshine of success! love for all those creatures who turn smiling faces on you, who hold their hands to you with joyous cries!

There is no question of deserts, of qualifications! No analysis, no criticism then — they follow later! That is just a moment of delicious madness; and to distinguish it from other frenzies it is called — a Dramatic Triumph!

CHAPTER THIRTY-NINTH

I Am too Dull to Understand a Premonition — By Mr. Daly's Side I See the Destruction of the Fifth Avenue Theatre by Fire.

HOW shall I call that strange influence that dumbly tries to warn, to prepare?

Many of us have had experience of this nameless something whose efforts are but rarely heeded. The something that one morning suddenly fills the mind with thoughts of some friend of the far past, who is almost entirely forgotten — persistent thoughts not to be shaken off.

You speak of the matter, and your family exclaim: "What on earth ever brought him to your mind?" and that night you either hear of the old friend's death or he sends you a letter from the other side of the world.

I had an acquaintance who one day found herself compelled, as it were, to talk of thefts, of remarkable robberies. She seemed unable to turn her mind to any other subject. If she looked at a lock, she thought how easy it would be to force it; at a window, how readily a man might enter it. Her people laughed and told her she was hoodooed; but next day she was robbed of every jewel she had in the world. What was it that was trying dumbly to warn her?

It was on the 1st of January that my mind became subject to one of those outside seizures. The snow was banked high in the streets — had been so for days. The unexpected sale of the house in Twenty-first Street had forced me to new quarters; I was at that moment in Twenty-fourth Street. As I raised my head from kissing my mother a Happy New Year, I remarked: "The

streets are in a terrible condition for a great fire — are they not?"

"Let us hope there won't be a great fire," replied mother, and began to pour out the coffee.

A little later the French lady coming in, to pass the compliments of the day, I was immediately moved to ask her if our fire service here was not superior to that of Paris? And I was greatly pleased at her joyous acquiescence, until I discovered that her remarks had reference to our larger fireplaces — there are always certain drawbacks accompanying a foreign landlady.

Then I went to the matinée — for, lo, the poor actress always does double work on days of festivity for the rest of the world, and all occasions of legalized feasting find her eating "a cold bite." We were doing a play called "False Shame," known in England as "The White Feather," a very light three-act play. The dresses and scenery were beautiful; Mr. Daly provided me with one gown — a combination of sapphire-blue velvet and Pompadour brocade that came within an ace of making me look handsome, like the rest.

He remarked upon its effect, and I told him I felt compelled to look well, since I had nothing else to do; but the day had gone by when such remarks could anger him. He laughed good-humoredly and said: "All the same, Miss, that scene at the organ is mighty pretty and taking, too."

For, look you, in the theatre "a little knowledge is not a dangerous thing." Complete knowledge is, of course, preferable; but, ah, how far a very little will go, and here was my poor tum-tumming, "one *and* two *and* three *and*," filling Mr. Daly's very soul with joy, because forsooth, in a lovely old English interior, all draped in Christmas greens, filled with carved-wood furniture, big logs burning in an enormous fireplace, wax candles in brass sconces, two girls are at the organ in dinner dress, who, nervously anxious about a New Year carol, with which they are going to surprise their guests at mid-night, seize the moment before dinner to try said carol over.

Miss Davenport, regal in satin, stood, music in hand, the fire-light on her handsome face. I, seated at the organ in my precious blue and brocade, played the accompaniment, and sang alto, and, though terror over this simple bit of work brought me to the verge of nervous prostration, the scene was, from the front, like a stolen peep into some beautiful private home, and it brought an astonishing amount of applause. But if I had not "*one* two threed" in Cincinnati on that grinning old piano, where would the organ-scene have been? Ah, a little knowledge, if spread ever so thin by a master hand like Mr. Daly's, will prove useful.

So don't refuse to learn a little because you fear you cannot afford to study thoroughly — if you are an actress.

While I was sitting through a long wait that day I fell into a brown study. The theatre dresser, who was very fond of me and gave me every spare moment of her time, came into my room and twice addressed me before I came out of my reverie.

"What in the world are you thinking of, Miss Clara?" she asked, and I answered with another question: "Mary, were you ever in a great fire?"

"No," she said; "were you?"

"Yes," I answered; "I have been twice burned out from shelter at dead of night," and I told her of that hotel fire at 3 A.M., where there was but one stairway to the street; of the mad brutality of the men; of the terrible and the ludicrous scenes; of my own escape, quite alone, in bare feet and one white garment; of my standing across a leaking hose, while a strange man pulled my right arm, frantically crying, "You come with me! my mother's got a blanket to wrap you up in!" and Mr. Ellsler, who had just arrived, seized my left arm, dragging me his way and shouting, "Come over to the house and get to bed quick, before you die of exposure!" while I felt the water spraying my forlornly shivering shins, and was more nearly torn asunder than was ever the Solomon baby.

"Oh, my!" said Mary, "how dreadful!"

"Yes," I said, musingly, "and what a fire this place would make — all these partitions of painted pine!"

"Oh, don't!" protested Mary.

"But," said I, "you know that's what theatres are built for — to burn is their natural end!" and then I was called, and went up-stairs to saunter through another act of the mild little play.

I owned but little jewelry then, but what I had was noticeably good. My rings, including the handsome pearl one Mr. Daly had given me as a souvenir of "47," I had to remove from my fingers for the last act, and when the curtain had fallen and I had rushed myself into street garments, and was leaving the dressing-room in haste to join my waiting mother at dinner, Mary called to me: "Miss Clara, you are leaving your diamond rings — but never mind," she picked them up and dropped them, one by one, into a little box: "I'll lock the door myself, you run along, the rings will be safe enough — run!" and the answering words I heard swiftly leaving my lips were absolutely involuntary and dictated by no thought of mine. They were:

"Yes, as far as theft is concerned, they are safe enough, but in case of fire? Better give them to me, Mary. Oh!" for the girl had dropped one on the floor. It was a bit of Oriental enamel set about with tiny sparks of diamonds. I put the others on, but would not wait for her to pick up the rolling truant, and away I went.

At the corner of Sixth Avenue and Twenty-fourth Street I came to a stand-still before two great snow-banks, and I thought again what they might mean in case of a fire.

I reached home at a brisk pace, ran up-stairs, threw off my cloak, and had drawn my dress-waist half off, when, without a preliminary knock, the door was flung open and my landlord, Mr. Bardin, white with the excitement that had wiped out his knowledge of English, stood gesticulating wildly and hurling French at me in seething

masses. I caught "*le feu!*" "*le feu!*" many times repeated; then "*le théâtre!*" and with a cry I seized his arm and shook him.

"What is it?" I cried, "do you mean fire?"

He nodded, and again came the words: "*le théâtre!*"

"Good heaven and earth! you don't mean *my* theatre, do you?" and then two great horses, hurling a fire-engine around the corner into our street made swift and terrifying answer. With a piercing cry I caught up my cloak, and throwing off somebody's restraining hands I dashed down-stairs and into the street, racing like mad, giving sobbing cries, and utterly unconscious for over two blocks' space that my waist was unclosed and my naked throat and chest were bare to the wintry wind.

At the corner of the street at Sixth Avenue I wrung my hands in anguish, crying, "Oh, dear God! I knew it! I knew it!" for there, stalled in the snow, was the engine, so desperately needed a little further on! And as I resumed my run I said to myself: "What is it that has tried so hard to tell me — to warn me? Tried all the day — and I would not understand — and now it's too late!"

Why I ran I do not know — it was not curiosity. I felt, somehow, that if I could get there in time I might do something — God knows what! As I neared the theatre the crowd grew more dense, yet to my gasping: "Please, oh, please!" an answer came in a quick moving aside to let pass the woman with the white, tear-wet face. I broke through the cordon and was making for the stage-door, when a rough hand caught me by the shoulder. There was an oath, and I was fairly hurled back toward the safety line.

"Oh, let me alone!" I cried, "I want to go to my room! It will take me but a moment!"

Again the rough hand reached out for me, when a strange man threw his arm in front of me protectingly: "Take care what you're about!" he said. "Be a little gentle — she has a right close to the line, she's one of the company! Can't you see?"

"Oh," grunted the policeman, "well, I didn't know, and I couldn't let her kill herself!"

"No," said the stranger, "but you had no call to pitch her about as you did!" And just then a long, thin hand caught mine, and Mr. Daly's voice said: "Come here, child!" and he led me across the street and up some steps, and there, opposite the burning building, I could realize the madness of my act in trying to enter. The front of the building stood firm, but beyond it, within, all was seething flame. It was like some magnificent spectacular production — some Satanic pantomime and ballet, and every now and then a whirling flame, crowned with myriad sparks, sprang madly up into the very sky like some devilish *première danseuse;* while the lesser fiends joined hands and circled frenziedly below.

Mr. Daly never spoke a word. He had not released my fingers, and so we stood, hand in hand, watching silently over the torment of his beloved theatre — the destruction of his gathered treasures. I looked up at him. His face gleamed white in the firelight; his eyes were wide and strained; his fingers, icy cold, never lessened their clinching grasp on mine. Then came the warning cry firemen are apt to give when they know the roof is going. I had heard it often, and understood that and their retreating movement. Mr. Daly did not, and when, with a crackling crash, the whole roof fell into the roaring depths, his hand, his body, relaxed suddenly; a sort of sobbing groan escaped his pale lips. But when the column of glowing sparks flew high into the air he turned away with a shiver and gave not one other look at the destroyed building.

Not one word was spoken on the subject. Glancing down he noticed I had no rubbers on and that streams of water were running in the street:

"Go home, child!" he said, speaking quickly and most kindly. A crowd of reporters came up to him: "Yes," he said, "in one moment, gentlemen," then to me: "Hurry home, get something to eat — you could have had no dinner!"

He gave one heavy sigh, and added: "I'm glad you were with me, it would have been worse alone." He pushed me gently from him. As I started down the street he called: "I'll send you word some time to-night what we're to do."

I left him to the reporters; I had not spoken one word from the moment I had begged to enter my dressing-room. I felt strangely sad and forlorn as I dropped, draggled and tired, into a chair. I said to mother: "It's gone! the only theatre in New York whose door was not barred against me, and — I — I think that at this moment I know just how a dog feels who has lost a loved master," and, dropping my face upon my hands, I wept long over the destruction of my first dramatic home in New York, the little Fifth Avenue Theatre.

CHAPTER FORTIETH

We Become "Barn-stormers," and Return to Open the New Theatre — Our Astonishing Misunderstanding of "Alixe," which Proves a Great Triumph.

MY first thought on awaking the next morning was one of dismay, on recalling the destruction of the little "P.H.C." — that being the actors contraction of Mr. Daly's somewhat grandiloquent "Parlor Home of Comedy." My grief over the burning of the pretty toy theatre was very real, and I would have been an astonished young woman had anyone prophesied that for me, personally, the disaster was to prove a piece of unqualified good luck.

And, by the way, that expression "good luck" reminds me of one of the incidents of the fire. That morning, when the firemen went to the ruins to examine into the state of the standing front wall, they looked upward, and there, all alone, on the burned and blackened space, smiling down in friendly fashion upon them, was the picture of Clara Morris — a bit charred as to frame and smoky as to glass, but the photograph (one taken by Kurtz), absolutely uninjured, being the one and only thing saved from the ruins. The firemen very naturally wanted it for their engine-house, and Mr. Daly said that for it many were claiming, pleading, demanding, bartering — but all in vain. His superstition was aroused. Not for anything in the world, he cried, would he part from his "luck," as he ever after called the rescued picture. So there again appeared the malice of inanimate things, for how else could one account for the plunging of that line, the entire length of the staircase, of splendidly framed pictures of loveliness, into the fiery depths, while the

plain and unimportant one kept its place in calm security?

Mr. Daly had a very expensive company on his hands. He had amazed other managers by his "corner" on leading men. With three already in his company he had not hesitated to draw on Boston for Harry Crisp, and on Philadelphia for Mr. Louis James; and when he added such names as George Clark, Daniel Harkins, George DeVere, James Lewis, William Lemoyne, William Davidge, A. Whiting, Owen Fawcett, George Parkes, F. Burnett, H. Bascombe, J. Beekman, Charles Fisher, George Gilbert, etc., one can readily understand that the salary of the men alone must have made quite an item in the week's expenses, and added to the sharp necessity of getting us to work as quickly as possible. And in actual truth the ruins of the little theatre were not yet cold when Mr. Daly had, by wire, secured a week for us, divided between Syracuse and Albany, and we were scrambling dresses together and buying new toilet articles — rouge, powders, and pomades, and transforming ourselves into "strolling players"; though, sooth to say, there was precious little "strolling" done after we started, for we were all rushing for rooms, for food, for trains, through a blizzard that was giving us plenty of delaying snow-drifts. And while the company was cheerfully "barn-storming," Mr. Daly was doing his best to find shelter for us in New York, engaging the little one-time church on Broadway. He had painters, paper-hangers, scrub-women, upholsterers, climbing over one another in their frantic efforts to do all he desired to have done in about one-half the regulation time allowed for such work; and while they toiled day and night with much noise and great demonstration of haste, he sat statue-still in a far corner, mentally reviewing every manuscript in his possession, searching eagerly for the one that most nearly answered to the needs of the moment. Namely, a play that required a strong cast of characters (he had plenty of men and women), little preparation, and scanty scenery (since he was short of both time and money). And,

finding "Alixe," then known as "The Countess de Somerive," he stopped short. The action of the play covered but one day — that was promising. There were but three acts — good; but two scenes — better! A conventional château garden-terrace for one act, and a simply elegant morning-room or stately drawing-room, according to managerial taste, could stand for the other two acts. A strong and dramatic work — requiring the painting of but two scenes. The play was found! The company was ordered home to rehearse it.

Now at that time, to my own great anxiety, I was by way of standing on very dangerous ground. The public had favored me almost extravagantly from the very first performance of *Anne Sylvester*, but the critics, at least the most important two, seemed to praise my efforts with a certain unwilling drag of the pen. Nearly all their kind words had the sweetness squeezed out of them between "buts" and "ifs," and, most wounding of all, my actual work was less often criticized than were my personal defects. Occasionally an actress's work may be too good for her own welfare. You doubt that? Yet I know an actress, still in harness, who in her lovely prime made so great a hit, in the part of an adventuress, that she has had nothing else to act since. Whenever a play was produced with such a character in it, she was sent for. But if she was proposed for a loyal wife, a gentle sweetheart, a modern heroine, the quick response invariably was: "Oh, she can't play anything but the adventuress."

There is nothing more fatal to the artistic value, to the future welfare of a young player, than to be known as "a one-part actress"; yet that was the very danger that was threatening me at the time of the burning of the home theatre. Following other parts known as strong, *Jezebel*, the half-breed East Indian, a velvet-footed treachery and twice would-be murderess, and *Cora*, the quadroon mad-woman, were in a fair way to injure me greatly. Already one paper had said: "Miss Morris has a strange, intuitive comprehension of these creatures of mixed blood."

But worse than that, the most powerful of the two critics I dreaded had said one morning: "Miss Morris played with care and much feeling. The audience wept *copiously*" (to anyone who has long read the great critic, that word "copiously" is tantamount to his full signature, so persistently does he use it), "but her performance was flecked with those tigerish gleams that seem to be a part of her method. She will probably find difficulty in equaling in any other line her success as *Cora.*"

No animal had ever a keener sense of approaching danger than I had, when my professional welfare was threatened, and these small straws told me plainly which way the wind was beginning to blow, and now, looking back, I am convinced that just one more "tigerish part" at that time would have meant artistic ruin to me, for, figuratively speaking, pens were already dipped to write me down "a one-part actress."

Then, one bitter cold day we returned to New York and Mr. Daly, sending for me, said he must ask a favor of me. A form of speech that literally made me "sit up straight" — yes, and gasp, too, with astonishment. With a regretful sigh he went on: "I suppose you know you are a strong attraction?"

I smiled broadly at his evident disapproval of such knowledge on my part, and he continued: "But in this play there is no part for you — yet I greatly need all my strongest people in this first cast. Of course as far as ability is concerned you could play the *Countess* and make a hit, but she's too old — so you'll not play the mother to marriageable daughters under my management, even in an emergency. Now I have Miss Morant, Miss Davenport and Miss Dietz, but — but I must have your name, too."

I nodded vigorously — I understood. And having seen the play in Paris, where it was one of the three pieces offered for an evening's programme, I mentally reviewed the cast and presently made answer, cheerfully and honestly: "Oh, yes! I see — it's that — 'er — *Aline?*

Justine? No, no! *Claudine?* that's the name of the maid. You want me to go on for that? All right! anything to help!"

He leaned forward, asking, eagerly: "Do you mean that?"

"Of course I do!" I answered.

"Ah!" he cried, "you don't guess well, Miss Morris, but you've the heart of a good comrade, and now I'm sure you will do as I ask you, and play *Alixe* for me?"

I sprang to my feet with a bound. "*Alixe?*" I cried. "I to play that child? oh, impossible! No — no! I should be absurd! I — I — I know too much — oh, you understand what I mean! She is a little convent-bred bit of innocence — a veritable baby of sixteen years! Dear Mr. Daly don't you see, I should ruin the play?"

He answered, rather coldly: "You are not given to ruining plays. The part does not amount to much. Good heavens! I admit it does not suit you, but think of my position; give me the benefit of your name as *Alixe* for one single week, and on the second Monday night Miss Jewett shall take the part off your hands."

"But," I whimpered, "the critics will make me the butt of their ridicule, for I can't make myself look like an *Alixe*."

"Oh, no they won't!" he answered, sharply. "Of course you won't expect a success, but you need fear no gibes for trying to help me out of a dramatic hole. Will you help me?" And of course there was nothing to do but swallow hard and hold out my hand for the unwelcome part.

Imagine my surprise when, on my way to rehearsal, I saw posters up, announcing the production of the play of "Alixe." I met Mr. Daly at the door and said: "Why this play was always called 'The Countess of Somerive.'"

"Yes," he replied, "I know — but 'Alixe' looks well, it's odd and pretty — and well, it will lend a little importance to the part!" — which shows how heavy were the

scales upon our eyes while we were rehearsing the new play.

Everyone sympathized with me, but said a week would soon pass, and I groaned and ordered heelless slippers, and flaxen hair parted simply and waved back from the temples to fall loosely on the shoulders, to avoid the height that heels and the fashionable chignon would give me, while a thin, white nun's veiling gown, high-necked and long-sleeved, over a low-cut white silk lining, buttoned at the back and finished with a pale blue sash and little side pocket, completed the costume, I prepared for the character. I was beginning to understand, as I studied her, and shamefacedly — to love!

Oh, yes, one often feels dislike or liking for the creature one is trying to represent. Just at first I said to myself, here is a modern *Ophelia,* but I was soon convinced that the innocence of *Alixe* was far more perfect than had been that of Shakespeare's weakling, who, through the training of court life, the warnings of a shrewd brother, and the admonitions of a tricky father, had learned many things — was ductile in stronger hands and could play a part; could lead a lover on to speech, without giving slightest hint of the hateful watching eyes she knew were upon him.

Poor "Rose of May," whose sweetness comes to us across the ages! As the garden-spider's air-spun silken thread is cast from bough to twig across the path, so her fragile thread of life looped itself from father to lover, to brother, to queen, and all the web was threaded thick with maiden's tears, made opalescent by rosy love, green hope, and violet despair. But each one she clung to raised a hand to brush the fragile thing aside, and so destroyed it utterly. Yet that tangled wreck of beauty, sweetness, and "a young maid's wits," remains one of the world's dearest possessions — the fair *Ophelia!*

But this modern maid was yet unspotted by the world. She found all earth perfect, as though God had just completed it, and loved ardently and without shame, as the

innocent do love. For this pure flower of crime was ignorant, to the point of bliss, of evil in the world about her. While her adored mother was to her as the blessed Madonna herself.

More and more convincing, as I carefully studied the part, became that perfect innocence. Not cold or reserved, but alive with faith, quivering, too, with girlish mirth, yet innocent. And as with roots deep in rankest, blackest ooze and mud, the lily sends up into the sunlit air its stainless, white-petaled blossom, to float in golden-hearted beauty upon the surface of the stream, so all sweet and open-hearted *Alixe* floated into view.

And I was expected to act a part like that! I worried day and night over it. Should I do this, should I do that? No — no! she was not coy — detestable word. I recalled the best *Ophelia* I had ever seen — a German actress. Would she do for a model? Perhaps — no! she was mystic, strange, aloof!

Oh, dear! and then, by merest accident, my mind wandered away to the past, and I said to myself, it should not be so hard. Every woman has been innocent. I was innocent enough when my first sweetheart paused at my side to say to me the foolish old words that never lose sweetness and novelty. I recalled with what open pleasure I had listened, with what honest satisfaction I accepted his attention. With a laugh I exclaimed: "I didn't even have sense enough to hide my gratification and pride, or to *pretend the least bit.*" I stopped suddenly — light seemed to come into my mind. Innocence is alike the world over, I thought; it only differs in degree. I sprang to my feet! I cried joyously: "I have caught the cue, I do believe — *I won't act at all!* I'll just speak the lines sincerely and simply and leave the effect to Providence.

The scales loosened a trifle over Mr. Daly's eyes at the last rehearsal but one. He was down in the orchestra speaking to the leader when I came to the end of the act, and the words: "The mother whom I have insulted? That young girl, then, is my sister — the sister whose hap-

piness I have stolen? whose future I have shattered? What — is — there — left — for — me to live for?"

Mr. Daly glanced up, and said, sharply: "What's that? 'er, Miss Morris, what are you going to do there as the curtain falls? I — I haven't noticed that speech before. Go back a bit, Mr. Fisher, Miss Morant, back to the Count's entrance; let me hear that again."

We went over the scene again: "H-e-m-m!" said Mr. Daly; "you've not answered my question, Miss Morris. What do you do at the fall of the curtain?"

"Nothing, sir," I answered, "just stare dazedly at space, I think — swaying a little perhaps."

"I want you to fall!" he declared.

"Oh!" I exclaimed, "please, don't you think that would be rather melodramatic? If she could stand while receiving that awful shock about her mother's shame she would hardly fall afterward, from mere horror of her own thoughts?"

"I know all that, but let me tell you there's always great effect in a falling body. At any rate you can sink into a chair — and so get the suggestion of collapse."

"There is no chair," I answered, cheerfully.

"Well," he replied, testily, "there can be one, I suppose. Here, boy, bring a large chair and place it behind Miss Morris."

"Mr. Daly," I argued, "if I fall heavily, as I must, for effect, the chair will jump, and that will be funny — see."

I fell — it did start backward, but Mr. Daly was equal to the emergency. "Take off the castors and place the chair hard against the end of the piano; now try!"

I did; the chair was firm as a rock. It was settled; I did as I was told, and fell at the end of the act ever after. And Mr. Daly came and patted me on the back, and said, kindly: "Don't fret; I honestly believe there's something in the little part after all. That speech made me feel creepy."

But the scales on my own eyes were still firm and tight,

and all I could see in the play was the strength, power, and passion of the scenes between the *Count* and *Countess*, and the probable hit of Mr. Louis James in his part of the *Duc de Mirandol*. The fate of this play rested in other hands than mine, thank goodness, and I rejoiced in the freedom from responsibility my small part gave me, and planned what I would do when Miss Jewett took *Alixe*.

The great night came. Another small auditorium awaited the coming of our patrons. There was a smell of scarce dried paint in front of the curtain and of scrubbing-soap behind it; but all was bright and fresh, and the house was soon packed with a brilliant audience. As the play to be produced had but a small cast, and as Mr. Daly was anxious that the entire company should share in this house-warming, he had invited Mr. John Brougham to write a sort of prologue, giving a few apt lines to every member of the company, and then to proceed to the play. This was done — but, alas! Mr. Brougham's work was utterly unworthy of him. There was not one flash of his wonderful wit. He confined himself to comments upon the fire, after this manner; I spoke, saying:

"I can't remember half the things I lost, I fear ——"

Mr. Lewis (breaking in). "One article you have not lost ——"

C. M. "What?"

Lewis. "'L'Article 47,' my dear."

Then Miss Jewett came forward to exclaim:

"My lovely 'peau de soie,'
The sweetest thing in silk I ever saw!"

It was only spoken one night. But the audience was so heartily kind to us all that many of us had tears of sheer gratitude in our eyes. We were in evening dress and were formed in a crescent-like line from box to box, as the heavy red curtains parted revealing us, and Mr. Daly was very proud of his family of manly-looking men and gracious women, and the audience greeted the assembled company heartily. But that was nothing to the welcome given as each favorite actor or actress stepped

forward to speak — and I was happy, happy, happy! when I found myself counted in as one of them, with the welcome to the beautiful Davenport, Jewett, Dietz, to the ever-favored Mrs. Gilbert, no longer, no heartier than my own! And as I bowed low and gratefully, for just one moment I could not help wishing that I had an important part to play, instead of the childish thing awaiting me.

The prologue being over, Mr. Daly, with a frowning, disappointed face, told those of the play to make all possible haste in changing their dresses, that they might get to work and rub out the bad impression already made.

Every important occasion seems to have its touch of the ridiculous, and so had this one. The "bustle" — the big wire affair, extending to the bottom of the skirt, had reached its hideous apogee of fashion at that time, yet what possible relation could there be between that teetering monstrosity and grace or sentiment or tragedy? Surely, I thought, this girl-pupil, brought straight from convent-school to country-home, might reasonably be bustleless — and I should look so much smaller — so much more graceful! But — Mr. Daly? Never — never! would he consent to such a breach of propriety! Fashion his soul loved! He pored over her plates! he bowed to her mandates!

My courage having failed me, when I hurried to my room I put on the obnoxious structure; but one glimpse of that camel-like hump on the back of *Alixe*, and the thought of the fall in the chair made me desperate. I tore the mass of wire off, and decided to keep out of sight till the last moment, and then make a rush for the stage.

"Ready, Miss Morris?"

"Ready!" I answered, as the question was asked from door to door.

In a few moments the call-boy came back again: "Are you ready? Everyone is out there but you."

"Oh, yes!" I said, showing myself to him, but still not leaving the shelter of my room; and I heard him saying: "Yes, sir, she's all ready, I saw her."

The curtain rose. Only a few lines were spoken before my entrance. I dared wait no longer — heavens! no! for there was Mr. Daly coming for me. I gathered up my skirts as bunchily as I could and ran out; but I could not deceive Mr. Daly. In an instant he missed the necessary camel's hump. "Good heaven and earth!" he shouted, "you've left your bustle!"

I broke into a run. "Wait!" he cried, loudly. He dashed into my open room, caught the big bustle up, and dragging it like a great cage behind him, came plunging down the entrance to me, crying: "Wait — wait!" and waving the other hand commandingly above his head.

I heard my music; I sprang to the platform I had to enter from. "That's me!" I cried. "Wait!" he ordered and reached out to catch me. I evaded his grasp and skipped through the door, leaving but a fold of my skirt in his hand. I was on the stage — and joy, oh, joy! I was without a bustle!

Mr. Daly did not like being laughed at, but when he glanced down and saw the thing he was dragging behind him, after the manner of a baby's tin wagon, he had to laugh, and verily there were others who laughed with him, while the scandalized dresser carried the rejected article back to a decent seclusion.

There is no manager, star, or agent alive whose experience will enable him to foresee the fate of an untried play. A very curious thing is that what is called an "actor's" play — one, that is, that actors praise and enjoy in the rehearsing, is almost always a failure, while the managerial judgment has been reversed so often by the public, that even the most enthusiastic producer of new plays is apt "to hedge" a bit, with: "Unless I deceive myself, this will prove to be the greatest play," etc.; while the mistakes made by actors and managers both anent the value of certain parts are illustrated sufficiently by E. H. Sothern, C. W. Couldock, Joseph Jefferson — all three of whom made immense hits in parts they had absolutely refused to accept, yielding only from necessity or obliging-

ness, and to their own astonishment finding fame in presenting the unwelcome characters. And to the misjudged *Lord Dundreary, Asa Trenchard,* etc., that night was added the name of *Alixe.*

Refined, intensely modern, the play was nevertheless a dread tragedy, and being French it almost naturally dealt with the breaking of a certain great commandment. And now — see: we actors thought that the stress and power of the play would be shown in the confession of the wife and in the scene of wild recrimination between her and the *Comte de Somerive,* when they met after eighteen years of separation. But see, how different was the view the public took. In the very first place then, when I escaped the bustle, and entered, straight, and slim, art had so reduced my usual height and changed my coloring, that until I spoke I was not recognized. The kindly welcome then given me calmed my fears, and I said to myself: "I can't be looking ridiculous in the part, or they would not do that!" And women, at least, can understand how my very soul was comforted by the knowledge. And just then a curious sense of joy seemed to bubble up in my heart. The sudden relief, the feeling of irresponsibility, the first-night excitement. Perhaps one, perhaps all together caused it. I don't know — I only know that meaning no disrespect, no irreverence, I could have sung aloud from the Benedicite: "*Omnia opera Domini!*" "Bless ye the Lord: praise him and magnify him forever!"

And the audience accepted the joyous little maid almost from the first girlish, love-betraying words she spoke, and yet — so sensitive is an audience at times — while still laughing over her sweet ignorance, they thrilled with a nameless dread of coming evil. They seemed to see the blue sky darkening, the threatening clouds piling up silently behind the white-robed child, whose perfect innocence left her so alone! Before the first act ended we discovered that the tragedy was shifting from the sinful mother and was settling down with crushing weight upon the shoulders of the stainless child. Indeed, the whole

play was like a dramatization of the awful words: "The sins of the fathers shall be visited upon the children!"

As the play went on and the impetuous grief of the child changed into proud self-restraint, while her agonizing jealousy of her adored mother developed, Mr. Daly, with wide, bright eyes, exclaimed: "I must have been blind — stone-blind! Why *Alixe* is the bone and marrow, the heart and soul of this play!"

Certainly the audience seemed to share his belief, for it called and called and called again for that misunderstood young person, in addition to the hearty approval bestowed upon the other more prominent characters. It was a very fine cast, Miss Fanny Morant making a stately and powerful *Comtesse de Somerive,* while Mr. Louis James gave a performance of the *Duc de Mirandol* that I never saw even approached again. Every other actor made of him either a fool or a brute, while James made of him a delightful enigma — a sort of well-bred simpleton, rattle-brain, and braggart, who at the last moment shows himself, beneath all disguise, a brave and loyal gentleman.

But the greatest triumph for *Alixe* followed in that act — the last — in which she does not speak at all. She had been able to bear loss, sorrow, renunciation, but as in olden times poison-tests were kept, crystal cups of such rare purity they shattered under contact with an evil liquid — so her pure heart broke at contact with her mother's shame. Poor, loving, little base-born! Pathetic little marplot! Seeing herself as only a stumbling-block to others, she sought self-effacement beneath the gentle waters of the lily-pond. And early in that last act, as her drowned body, carried in the arms of the two men who had loved her, was laid before the starting eyes of the guilty mother, and the loving, forgiving, pleading letter of the suicide was read above her, actual sobs rose from the front of the house. It *was* a heart-breaking scene.

But when the curtain fell, oh! what a very whirlwind broke loose in that little theatre! The curtain shot up and down, up and down, and then, to my amazement, Mr.

Daly signaled for me to go before the curtain, and I couldn't move. He stamped his foot and shouted: "Come over here and take this call!" and I called back: "I can't! I am all pinned up, so I can't walk!"

For, that my skirts might not fall away from my ankles, when I was being carried across the stage, I had stood upon a chair and had my garments tightly wound about me and securely fastened, and unfortunately the pins were behind — and I all trussed up, nice and tight and helpless.

Mr. Daly came tearing over to me, and down he went upon his knee to try to free me, but a muttered "D——n!" told me that he could not find the pins, and the applause, oh, the precious applause that was being wasted out there! Suddenly he rose — tossed that extraordinary hat of his off, picked me up in his arms and carried me like a big property doll to the curtain's side, signaled it up, and, with his arm about me, supported me on to the stage. Oh, but I was proud to stand there with him, for in those days he would not make the simplest speech; would not show himself even. Why, at the banquet of his own giving, he hid behind a big floral piece and made Mr. Oakey Hall speak for him. And yet he had been pleased enough with my work to bring me there himself. I saw his hand upon my shoulder, and suddenly I stooped my head and kissed it, in purest gratitude.

Afterward, when I had been unpinned, as we walked through the entrance together, he said, with a gleeful laugh: "This is the third and greatest, but we share it."

"The third what?" I asked.

"The third surprise," he answered. "First you surprised the town in 'Man and Wife'; second, you surprised *me* in 'L'Article 47'; now 'Alixe' — the greatest of all — surprises you as well as me!"

He stopped, stepped in front of me and asked: "What do you most wish for?"

I stared at him. He added, "About your home, say?"

And swiftly I made answer: "A writing-desk; why?"

He laughed a little and said: "Good-night, now. Oh, by the way, there's a forfeit against you for not wearing your bustle to-night."

But I was not greatly alarmed or excited — not half so much as I was next day, about four o'clock, when some men drove up and insisted upon leaving in my room a handsome inlaid desk that was taller than I was. At first I protested, but a card, saying that it was "A souvenir of 'Alixe,' from your manager and friend, A. Daly," changed my bearing to one of most unseemly pride.

In the next ten days I wrote I think to every soul I knew, and kept up my diary with vicious exactitude, just for the pleasure of sitting before the lovely desk, that to-day stands in my "den" in the attic. Its mirror-door, is dim and cloudy, its sky-blue velvet writing-leaf faded to a silvery gray, but even so it still remains "A souvenir of 'Alixe,' from A. Daly."

CHAPTER FORTY-FIRST

Trouble about Obnoxious Lines in "Madeline Morel" — Mr. Daly's Manipulation of Father X: In Spite of our Anxiety the Audience accepts the Situation and the Play — Mr. Daly gives me the smallest Dog in New York.

THE last and fourth success that was granted to me under Mr. Daly's management was in "Madeline Morel." Of course I played in many plays, sometimes small, comparatively unimportant parts, sometimes, as in the two-hundred-night run of "Divorce," I played a long, hard-working part, that was without any marked characteristic or salient feature to make a hit with.

But I only mention "Madeline Morel" because of a couple of small incidents connected with its production. First of all, let me say that I believe Mr. Daly, who was an ardent Catholic, was not the first manager to give benefits to the Orphan Asylums, for I think that had long been a custom, but he was the first to arrange those monster programmes, which included the names of every great attraction in the city — bar none. The result was not merely an Academy of Music literally packed, but crowds turned from its doors. I remember what excitement there was over the gathering together in one performance of such people as Fechter, Sothern, Adelaide Neilson, Aimée, and Mr. and Mrs. Barney Williams. I first saw the beautiful Mary Anderson at one of these benefits, as well as those two clever English women, Rose Coghlan and Jeffreys Lewis. Later on, when I was under Mr. Palmer's management, I had an experience at a benefit that I am not likely to forget. I had consented to do the fourth act of "Camille" (the ball-room scene), and when I swept through the crowd of "guests," every word was

wiped clean out of my memory, for as they faced me I recognized in the supposed supers and extras all the various stars — the leading ladies and gentlemen who had had a place on the lengthy programme. Working hard, giving of their best, they had all laughingly joined in this gracious whim of playing supernumeraries in Dumas's ball-scene. And I remember that Mademoiselle Aimée was particularly determined to be recognized as she walked and strolled up and down. Once I whispered imploringly to her: "Turn your back, Madame!" but she laboriously answered: "Non! I haiv' not of ze shame to be supe for you, Mademoiselle!" It was a charming compliment, but more than a bit overwhelming to its recipient.

Well, Mr. Daly having originated, as I believe, these splendid and lengthy benefit performances, was, as a result, able to place a goodly sum of money at the service of the Asylum authorities, and naturally he received warm thanks from his Church.

Then, when "Madeline Morel" came along, with the great cathedral scene, we all stood aghast at what I was called upon to say and do. Everyone was on the stage, and nearly everyone whispered: "Sacrilege!" I stopped stock-still, in sheer fright. Mr. Daly pulled nervously at the lapel of his coat for a moment, and then said, sharply, "Go on!" I obeyed, but right behind me someone said: "And he calls himself a Catholic!"

It was a horrid bit, in an otherwise beautiful and impressive act. As a "sister" who had served the "novitiate," I had just taken the life vows and had been invested with the black veil. Then the wedding procession and the Church procession, coming from opposite sides and crossing before the altar, like a great "X," brought the bridegroom and the black nun face to face, in dreadful recognition, and in the following scene I had to drag from my head the veil and swathing white linen — had to tear from my breast the cross, and, trampling it under foot, stretch my arms to Heaven and, with upraised face, cry:

"I call down upon my guilty soul the thunders of a curse, that none may hear and live!" and then fall headlong, as though my challenge had been accepted.

Nothing was talked of day or night but that scene, and those of the company who were Catholics were particularly excited, and they cried: "Why, if we find it so repellant, what on earth will an audience think of it?"

Some prophesied hisses, some that the people would rise and leave the theatre. That Mr. Daly was uneasy about its effect he did not attempt to hide, and one day he said to me: "I think I'll call on Father X ——— (his confessor and friend) to-morrow evening, and get his — well — his opinion on this matter. But, unfortunately, rumors had already reached churchly ears, and the reverend gentleman came that same day to inquire of Mr. Daly concerning them. I say "unfortunately," because Mr. Daly was a masterful man and resented anything like interference. Had he been permitted to introduce the matter himself, no doubt a few judicious words from the priest would have induced him to tone down the objectionable speech and action: but the visit to him rubbed him the wrong way and aroused every particle of obstinacy in him. He described the play, however, assured his old friend there were no religious arguments, no homilies in it, but when he came to *the* scene, the Father shook his head: "No — no! my son!" said he, "I do not see how that can be sanctioned."

Mr. Daly reasoned, argued, almost pleaded; but though it evidently hurt the good man to refuse, since he was greatly attached to his son in the church, he still shook his head and at last declared it was a serious matter, and he would have to bring it to the Bishop's attention. But that was just what Mr. Daly did not want. "Can you not see, Father," he said, "these lines are spoken in a frenzy? They come from the lips of a woman mad with grief and trouble! They have not the value or the consequence of words spoken by a sane person!"

The priest shook his head. Suddenly Mr. Daly ceased

his arguments and persuasions. After a little silence, he said: "You cannot sanction this scene, then, Father?"

A positive shake of the head. Mr. Daly looked pensively out of the window.

"Too bad!" he sighed, "too bad!"

The kind old man sighed too, companionably.

"You see, if that scene is not done, the play cannot be done."

"Dear, dear!" murmured the priest.

"And if the play is not done, having nothing else at hand, I shall have to close the season with the old play, and naturally that will mean bad business."

"Too bad, too bad!" muttered the voice, comfortably.

"And if the season ends badly, why, of course, there can be no charity benefit."

"What?" sharply exclaimed the erstwhile calm voice. "No benefit for our poor? Why — why — 'er — I — dear me! and the Asylum needs help so badly! — 'er — a 'frenzy' you said, my son? Spoken in madness? — 'er — I — well — I will give the matter serious thought, and I'll acquaint you with my conclusion," and evidently much disturbed he retired.

And when Mr. Daly told me this, he added, with a twinkle in his eye: "He will get the benefit, surely enough." And when he saw my bewilderment, he added: "Don't you see? I had my doubts about the Bishop, but dear old Father X ——— will be so anxious about his orphans that he will make things right for me with him, for their sakes." A view of the matter that proved to be correct. Verily a clever man was our manager.

Day after day we rehearsed, and day after day I hoped that the dreadful bit of business might be toned down. At last my nerves gave way completely, and after a particularly trying rehearsal I rushed to the managerial office, and, bursting into tears, begged hard to be excused from trampling the cross under foot.

"Surely," I sobbed, "it's bad enough to have to tear off the veil — and — and — I'm afraid something will happen!"

"And," said Mr. Daly, "to tell you the truth, I'm afraid, too!"

He gave me a glass of water, and waiting a moment for me to conquer my tears, he went on: "I'm glad you have come in, I was just about sending for you."

"Oh!" I interrupted, "you are going to cut something out?" But he answered, gravely: "No! I shall cut nothing out! But look here, you are a brave girl, and forewarned is forearmed, you know, so I am going to speak quite plainly. I don't know how the public may receive that bit of business; perhaps with dead silence; perhaps with hisses."

I sprang to my feet. "Sit down!" he said, "and listen. You shall not be held responsible, in the slightest degree, for the scene, I promise you that. If anything disagreeable happens it shall be fairly stated that you played under protest. It is, of course, possible that the scene may go along all right, but I want to warn you that you may prepare yourself for the storm, should it come. I don't want you to be taken unawares and have you faint or lose your nerve. So, now whenever you go over your part and reach that point, say to yourself: 'Here they hiss!' Don't look so pale. I'm sorry you have to bear the brunt alone, but you will be brave, won't you?"

And I rose, and after my usual habit, tried to jest, as I answered: "Since you alone gave me my opportunity of being *applauded* in New York, I suppose it's only fair that I should accept this opportunity of being *hissed*."

Excited and miserable I went home. Faithfully I followed Mr. Daly's suggestion. But no matter how often I went over the scene, whenever I said: "Here they hiss," my face went white, my hands turned cold as stone. 'Twas fortunate the first performance was near, for I could not have borne the strain long. As it was, I seemed to wear my nerves on the outside of my clothes until the dreaded night was over.

The play had gone finely; most of the people were well cast. Miss Morant, Miss Davenport, Miss Jewett, Miss

Varian especially so; while Fisher, Lewis, Lemoyne, Crisp, Clark, and James did their best to make a success and close in glory the season that had been broken in half by the burning of the home theatre. The end of the third act had been mine. The passionate speech of renunciation and farewell had won the favor of the house, and call after call followed. As I had played the scene alone, I should have been proud and happy — should have counted the calls with a miser's gloating satisfaction. But instead my blood was already chilling with dread of the coming act.

"Good Lord, child!" said Mr. Daly, "your face is as long as my arm! Don't anticipate evil — take the good the gods send you. You are making a hit and you're losing all the pleasure of it. I'm ashamed of you!"

But he wrung my fingers hard, even as he spoke, and I knew that his words were, what the boys call a "bluff."

Then the curtain was rising. The cathedral scene won a round of applause, and kneeling at the altar, as children say, "I scringed" at the sound. Then after a little I was coming down the stage and the audience, recognizing *Madeline* in the nun, applauded long and heartily, and I fairly groaned aloud. After that the act proceeded really with stately dignity, but to my terrified eyes it seemed indecent haste; and as I fell into line with the Church procession of sisters, of novices, of priests and acolytes, I felt myself a morsel in a kaleidoscopic picture of bright colors, the churchly purple and its red and white, the brilliant gowns of the women of fashion, the golden organ-pipes, the candles burning star-like upon the altar, the massed flowers, and over all, giving a touch of floating unreality to everything, the clouds of incense.

Then suddenly, out of the bluish haze, there gleamed the white, set face, for love of which I was to sacrifice my very soul! The scene was on, swift, passionate, and furious, and almost before I could realize it, the dreadful words had been spoken — and with my foot upon the cross, I stood in a silence the like of which I had never

known before! I had not fallen — stricken absolutely motionless with terror I stood — waiting.

In that crowded building even breathing seemed suspended. There reigned a silence, like to death itself! It was awful! Then without changing my attitude by the movement of a finger, I pitched forward, falling heavily at the feet of the dismayed lover and the indignant priest. And suddenly, sharply as by a volley of musketry, the silence was broken by applause. Yes, actually by applause, and beneath its noise I heard a voice behind me gasp: "Well, I'll be blest!"

When all was ended, and after the final courtesies had been extended and gratefully accepted, there was an outburst of excited comment, and more than one experienced actor declared that never again would they even try to anticipate the conduct of an audience. Old Mr. Fisher told Mr. Daly he had felt the rising hiss and he was positive it was regard for the woman that had restrained its expression.

Mr. Daly patted the old gentleman on the shoulder and answered: "Perhaps — perhaps! but if for her sake the public has swallowed that scene one night, the public have got to go on swallowing it every night — and that's the important point for us."

Very shamefacedly I apologized for not falling at the proper time, and as I hurriedly promised to do so the next night, to my surprise Mr. Daly stopped me with a quick: "No! no! change nothing! I was in front, and that pause, staring straight up into heaven, was tremendously effective. It was as if God offered you a moment to repent in — then struck you down! Change nothing, and to-morrow you shall have your heart's desire."

I gazed at him in amazement. He laughed a bit maliciously and said: "Old heat-registers and things carry voices. I hear many things. I have heard, for instance, about a man named Dovey and a wonderful toy terrier that weighs by ounces. I wouldn't open my eyes any wider, if I were you; they might stay that way. Well, will

you show me the way to Dovey's by eleven to-morrow?"

"But," I faltered, "I'm afraid of the price ——"

"That's my affair," he answered curtly, then added, more kindly, "Good-night! you have behaved well, Miss Morris, and if I can give you a pleasure — I shall be glad."

And next day I owned the tiniest dog in New York, who slept in a collar-box, by my pillow, that I might not hurt it in the night. Whose bark was like a cambric needle, and who, within five minutes after her arrival, challenged to deadly combat my beloved Bertie, who weighed good four pounds.

CHAPTER FORTY-SECOND

I am Engaged to Star part of the Season — Mr. Daly Breaks his Contract — I Leave him and under Threat of Injunction — I meet Mr. Palmer and make Contract and appear at the Union Square in the "Wicked World."

THE third season in New York was drawing to its close, and by most desperate struggling I had managed just to keep my head above water — that was all. I not only failed to get ahead by so much as a single dollar, but I had never had really enough of anything. We were skimped on clothes, skimped on food, indeed we were skimped on everything, except work and hope deferred. When, lo! a starring tour was proposed to me. After my first fright was over I saw a possibility of earning in that way something more than my mere board, though, truth to tell, I was not enraptured with the prospect of joining that ever-moving caravan of homeless wanderers, who barter home, happiness, and digestive apparatus for their percentage of the gross, and the doubtful privilege of having their own three-sheet posters stare them out of countenance in every town they visit. Yet without the brazen poster and an occasional lithograph hung upside down in the window of a German beer saloon, one would lack the proof of stardom.

No, I had watched stars too long and too closely to believe theirs was a very joyous existence; besides, I felt I had much to learn yet, and that New York was the place to learn it in; so, true to my promise, off I went and laid the matter before Mr. Daly — and he *did* take on, but for such an odd reason. For though he paid me the valued compliment of saying he could not afford to lose me, his

greatest anger was aroused by what he called the "demoralization" my act would bring into his company.

"You put that bee in their bonnets and its buzzing will drown all commands, threats, or reasons. Every mother's son and daughter of them will demand the right to star! Why, confound it! Jimmie Lewis, who has had one try at it, is twisting and writhing to get at it again — even now; and as for Miss Davenport, she will simply raise the dead over her effort to break out starring, and Ethel — oh, well, she's free now to do as she likes. But you star one week and you'll see how quick she will take the cue, while Miss — oh, it's damnable! You can't do it! it will set everyone on end!"

"If you will give me a salary equal to that of other people, who do much less work than I do, I will stay with you," I said.

But he wanted me to keep to the small salary and let him "make it up to me," meaning by that, his paying for the stage costumes and occasional gifts, etc. But that was not only unbusiness-like and unsatisfactory — though he undoubtedly would have been generous enough — but it was a bit humiliating, since it made me dependent on his whims and, worst of all, it opened the door to possible scandal, and I had but one tongue to deny with, while scandal had a thousand tongues to accuse with.

It was a queer whim, but he insisted that he could not give me the really modest salary I would remain for, though, in his own words, I should have "three times its value." Finally we agreed that I should give him three months of the season every year as long as he might want my services, and the rest of the season I should be free to make as much money as I could, starring. He told me to go ahead and make engagements at once to produce "L'Article 47" or "Alixe"— I to pay him a heavy nightly royalty for each play, and when my engagements were completed to bring him the list, that he might not produce "Alixe" with his company before me in any city that I was to visit. I did as he had requested me. I was bound

in every contract to be the first to present "L'Article 47" or "Alixe" in that city. I was then to open in Philadelphia. I had been announced as a coming attraction, when I received startling telegrams and threats from the local manager that "Mr. Daly's Fifth Avenue Company" was announced to appear the week before me in "Alixe," in an opposition house. Thus Mr. Daly had most cruelly broken faith with me. I went to him at once. I reproached him. I said: "These people will sue me!"

"Bah!" he sneered, "they can't take what you have not got!"

"But," I cried, "they will throw over my engagement!"

His face lit up with undisguised pleasure. He thrust his hand into the open desk-drawer. "Ah," he smiled, "I have a part here that might have been written for you. It is great — honestly great, and with this starring business disposed of, we can get at it early!"

I rose. I said: "Mr. Daly, you have done an unworthy thing, you have broken faith with me. If you produce 'Alixe' next week, I will never play for you again!"

"You will have to!" he threatened. "I have broken the verbal part of our contract, but you cannot prove it, nor can you break the written part of the contract!"

I repeated: "I shall play for you no more!"

And he hotly answered: "Well, don't you try playing for anyone else. I give you fair warning — I'll enjoin you if you do! The law is on my side, remember."

"My dear sir," I said, "the law was not specially created for you to have fun with, and it has an odd way of protecting women at times. I shall at all events appeal to it to-morrow morning."

Next morning my salary was sent to me. I took from it what was due me for two nights' work I had done early in the week, and returned the rest, saying: "As I am not a member of the company, no salary need be sent me." And eleven o'clock found me in the office of ex-Judge William Fullerton.

He declared that my mind showed a strong legal bent, and he congratulated me upon my refusal of the proffered salary. "If," said he, "you receive a desirable offer in the way of an engagement, take it at once and without fear. Mr. Daly will threaten you, of course, but I can't believe his lawyers will permit him to take this matter into court. In attacking you he will attack every young, self-supporting woman in New York, in your person. The New York man will sympathize with you. Public opinion is a great power, and no manager wishes to see it arrayed against him."

And thus it happened that I was not legally quite off with the old manager when I was on with the new — in the person of Mr. A. M. Palmer, my sometime manager and still my honored friend. Our relations were always kindly, yet to this hour I squirm mentally when I recall our first meeting. I was taking some chocolate at a woman's restaurant on Broadway, and a common friend brought the "Union Square" manager in and introduced him, simply as a friend, for whatever my secret hope, there had been no open word spoken about business in connection with this interview. But, given a meeting between an idle actress and an active manager, a Barkis-like willingness to talk business is sure to develop.

Looking up and seeing Mr. Harriott advancing toward my table with a strange gentleman in tow, I gave a nervous swallow and fixed my attention upon the latter. His rigid propriety of expression, the immaculately spotless and creaseless condition of his garments made me expect each moment to hear the church-bells clang out an invitation to morning service. Being presented, he greeted me with a gentle coldness of manner — if I may use the expression — that sent my heart down like lead. Now extreme nervousness on my part nearly always expresses itself in rapid, almost reckless speech, and directly I was off at a tangent, successfully sharing with them the fun of various absurdities going on about us; until, in an evil moment, my eye fell upon the smug face of a young rural

beau, whose terrified delight in believing himself a very devil of a fellow was so ludicrously evident, that one wept for the presence of a Dickens to embalm him in the amber of his wit.

"Oh!" I said, egged on by one of those imps who hover at the elbow of just such women as I am, "can't you see he is a minister's son? He has had more religion given to him than he can digest. He's taking a sniff of freedom. He has kicked over the traces and he has not quite decided yet whether he'll go to the demnition bow-wows entirely, or be moderately respectable. He's a minister's son fast enough, but he doesn't know yet whether he will manage a theatre in New York or run away with the Sunday-school funds; and that red-haired young person oppo — opposite ——" And I trailed off stupidly, for judging by the ghastly silence that had fallen upon my hearers and the stricken look upon Mr. Harriott's face, I knew I had set my foot deep in some conversational morass. I turned a frightened glance upon Mr. Palmer's face, and I have always been glad that I was in time to catch the twinkling laughter in his cool, hazel eyes. Then he leaned toward me and gently remarked: "I am the son of a minister, Miss Morris, and the manager of a theatre, but upon my word the Sunday-school funds never suffered at my hands."

"Oh!" I groaned. And I must have looked just as a pet dog does when it creeps guiltily to its mistress's foot and waits to be smacked. I *really* must, because he suddenly broke into such hearty laughter. Then presently he made a business proposition that pleased me greatly, but I felt I must tell him that Mr. Daly promised to get out an injunction to prevent my appearance anywhere, and he would probably not care to risk any trouble. And then there came a little squeeze to Mr. Palmer's lips and a little glint in his eye, as he remarked: "You accept my offer and I'll know how to meet the injunction."

And I can't help it — being born on St. Patrick's Day and all that — if people *will* step on the tail of one's coat,

why of course they must expect "ructions." And to tell the honest truth, Mr. Palmer's perfect willingness to fight that injunction filled me with unholy glee; which combined beautifully with gratitude for his quick forgiveness of my *faux pas* — and I signed a contract with Mr. Sheridan Shook and Mr. A. M. Palmer and was announced to appear in "The Wicked World" at the Union Square Theatre, and I was pursued day and night by slim young men with black curly hair, who tried to push folded papers into my unwilling hands; while life behind the scenes grew more and more strenuous, as scene-shifters, property-men, and head carpenters, armed with braces and screw-eyes, charged any unknown male creature that looked as if he could define the word injunction.

The night came, and with it an equinoctial gale of perfect fury. Whether the people were blown in by the storm or fought their way in by intention, I can't decide. I only know they were there and in numbers sufficient to crowd the bright and ruddy auditorium. They were a trifle damp about the ankles and disordered about the hair, but their hands were in prime working order, their hearts were warm, their perceptions quick — what more could the most terrified actress pray for in an audience?

The play was one of Gilbert's deliciously poetic satires — well cast, beautifully produced, after the manner of Union Square productions generally, and Success shook the rain off her wings and perched upon our banners, and we were all filled with pride and joy, in spite of the young men with folded white papers who swirled wildly up and down Fourth Avenue in the storm, and of those other young men who came early and strove diligently to get seats within reaching distance of the foot-lights, only to find that by some strange accident both those rows of chairs were fully occupied when the doors were first throw open. Yes, in spite of all those disappointed young men, we had a success, and I was not enjoined. Yet there were two rather long managerial faces there that night. For unless my out-of-town managers threw me over-

board, because of the trouble about "Alixe," I could remain in this charming play of "The Wicked World" but two short weeks. And no manager can be expected to rejoice over the forced withdrawal of a success.

And right there Mr. Palmer saw fit to do a very gracious thing. After the first outburst of anger and disappointment from Mr. Thomas Hall (my Philadelphia manager), instead of breaking his engagement with me, as he had every right to do, he stood by his contract to star me and at the same terms, if I could provide a play — any play to fill the time with. I had nothing of course but the Daly plays, so my thanks and utter abandonment of the engagement were neatly packed within the regulation ten telegraphic words, when Mr. Palmer offered me the use of his play, "The Geneva Cross," written by George Fawcett Rowe. In an instant my first telegram changed into a joyous acceptance. I was studying my part at night, my mother was ripping, picking out and pressing at skirts and things by day. Congratulating myself upon my good fortune in having once seen the play in New York, I went to Philadelphia, and after just one rehearsal of this strange play, I opened my starring engagement. Can I ever forget the thrill I felt when I received my first thousand dollars? I counted it by twenties, then by tens, but I got the most satisfaction out of counting it by fives — it seemed so much more that way. I was spending it with the aid of a sheet of foolscap paper and a long pencil until after two o'clock in the morning. My mother to this day declares that that was the very best black silk dress she has ever owned — that one out of that first thousand she means, and on the wall here beside me hangs a fine and rare engraving of the late Queen Victoria in her coronation robes that I gave myself as a memento of that first wonderful thousand. That, when the other managers saw that Mr. Hall kept faith with me, and had apparently not lost by his action, they followed suit and all my engagements were filled — thanks to Mr. Palmer's kindness and Mr. Hall's pluck as well as generosity.

CHAPTER FORTY-THIRD

We Give a Charity Performance of "Camille," and Are Struck with Amazement at our Success — Mr. Palmer Takes the Cue and Produces "Camille" for Me at the Union Square.

THEN came the great "charity benefit," and "Camille" — that "Ninon de l'Enclos" of the drama, who, in spite of her years, can still count lovers at her feet.

It is amazing how much accident has to do with the career of actors.

Shakespeare says:

> "There 's a divinity that shapes our ends,
> Rough-hew them how we will."

And heaven knows I "rough-hewed" the "Camille" proposition to the best of my power. I came hurrying back to New York, specially to act at the mighty benefit, given for the starving poor of the city. Every theatre was to give a performance on the same day, and a ticket purchased was good at any one of them. I had selected "Love's Sacrifice," an old legitimate play, for that occasion and Mr. Palmer had cast it, when an actress suddenly presented herself at his office declaring she had made that play *her* property, by her own exceptional work in it in former years, at another theatre. Threatening hysterics often prove valuable weapons in a manager's office, where, strangely enough, "a scene" is hated above all things.

I was informed of this lady's claim to a play that was anybody's property, and at once withdrew in the interest of peace. But what then was to be done for the benefit?

Every play proposed had some drawback. Mr. Palmer suggested "Camille," and all my objections crowding to my lips at once, I fairly stammered and spluttered over the expression of them: I hated! hated! hated! the play! The people who had preceded me in it were too great! I should be the merest pigmy beside them. I did not think *Camille* as vulgar and coarse as one great woman had made her — nor so chill and nun-like as another had conceived her to be. And the critics would fall upon me and joyously tear me limb from limb. They would justly cry "Presumption," and — and — I had no clothes! no, not one stitch had I to wear (of course you will make the usual allowance for an excited woman and not take that literally!) and then, oh, dear! I'm dreadfully ashamed of myself, but to tell the exact truth, I wept — for the first and only time in my life — I wept from anger!

We all fumed — we, meaning Mr. Palmer, Mr. Cazauran, that ferret-faced, mysterious little man, whose clever brain and dramatic instincts made him so valuable about a theatre; and the big, silently observant Mr. Shook, and I. Cazauran said he knew all the business of the play and could tell me it, and began with certain things Miss Heron (the greatest *Camille* America had had) had done, and I indignantly declared I would leave a theatre before I would do as much. I argued it was unnecessary. *Camille* was not brutal — she had associated with gentlemen, members of the nobility, men who were acquainted with court circles. She would have learned refinement of manners from them. Such brutalities would have shocked and driven away the boyish, clean-hearted *Armand.* Her very disease made her exquisitely sensitive to music, to beauty, to sentiment. If she repelled, it was with cynicism, sarcasm, her evident knowledge of the world. She allured men by the very refinement of her vice. And as I paused to take breath, Mr. Shook's bass voice was heard for the first time, as he asked, conclusively: "Whom can we get for *Armand* on such short notice?"

I turned piteously to Mr. Palmer: "The critics" — I gasped and stopped. He smiled reassuringly and said: "Don't be frightened, Miss Morris, they will never attack a piece of work offered in charity. Just do your best and remember it's only for once."

"Dear Lord! only for once!" and with wet cheeks I made my way home, with a copy of the detested play in my hand. Late that evening I was notified that Mr. Mayo would play *Armand*.

I had not one dress suited for the part. I knew I should look like a school-mistress in one act and a stage *ingénue* in another. I had a ball-room gown, but it was not a suitable color. I should only be correct when I got into my night-dress and loose wrapper in the last act. Actress fashion, I got my gowns together first, and then sat down with my string of amber beads to study — I never learn anything so quickly as when I have something to occupy my fingers, and my string of amber beads has assisted me over many and many an hour of mental labor — a pleasanter custom than that of walking and studying aloud, I think, and surely more agreeable to one's near neighbors.

The rehearsing of that play was simply purgatorial. We went over two acts on one stage one day and over three acts on another stage the next day, and we shrieked our lines out against the tumult of creaking winches, of hammering and sawing, of running and ordering — for every stage was filled at the rear with rushing carpenters and painters. Yet those were the only rehearsals that unfortunate play received for the benefit performance, and, as a result, we were all abroad in the first act, in particular, and I remember I spent a good part of my time in trying to induce the handsome young English woman who did *Olympe* to keep out of my chair and to go to and from the piano at the right moment.

The house was packed to the danger-point, the play being given at what was then called "The Lyceum," which Charles Fechter had just been having remodeled, and

the police discovering that day that the floor of the balcony was settling at the right, under the too great weight, very cleverly ordered the ushers to whisper a seeming message in the ear of a person here, there, and yonder, who would nod, rise, and step quietly out, returning a moment later to smilingly motion their party out with them, and thus the weight was lightened without a panic being caused, though it made one feel rather sick and faint afterward to note the depth to which the floor had sagged under the feet of that tightly packed audience.

James Lewis used to say to me: "Clara is the biggest fraud of a first-nighter the profession can show. There she'll stand shivering and shaking, white-sick with fright, waiting for her cue, and when she gets it, she skips on and waltzes through her scene as if she'd been at it for a year at least. No wonder Mr. Daly calls her his best first-nighter."

So at that first performance of "Camille," as Frank Mayo touched my icy hand and burning brow, and saw the trembling of my limbs, as with fever-dried lips I waited for the curtain's rise, he said: "God! but you suffer! I reckon you'll not act much to-day, little woman!" And a few minutes later, as I laughed and chatted gayly through the opening lines of the play, I distinctly heard Frank say: "Well, of all the sells! Why confound her, I'm twice as nervous as she is!"

The first act went with a sort of dash and go that was the result of pure recklessness. The house was delighted. The curtain had to go up twice. We all looked at one another, and then laughingly laid it to the crowd. The second act went with such a rush and sweep of hot passion between *Armand* and *Camille* that when *De Varville's* torn letter was cast to *Nanine* as *Camille's* answer, and the lovers leaped to each others' arms, the house simply roared, and as the curtain went up and down, up and down, Mayo gasped in amazement: "Well, I'm damned!" But I made answer: "No, you're not — but you *will* be if you hammer my poor spine in another

act as you have in this. Go easy, Frank; I can't stand it!"

The third act went beautifully. Many women sobbed at times. I made my exit some little time before the end of the act, and of course went directly to my room, which was beneath the stage, and there began to dress for the ball-room scene, and lo! after *Armand* had had two or three calls for his last speech, something set them on to call for *Camille*. And they kept at it, too, till at last a mermaid-like creature — not exactly half fish and half woman, but half ball-gown train and half dinky little dressing-sack — came bobbing to the curtain side, delighting the audience by obeying it, but knocking spots out of the illusion of the play.

In the fourth act Mr. Mayo played base-ball with me. He batted me and hurled me and sometimes I had a wild fear that he would kick me. Finally, he struck my head so hard that a large gold hairpin was driven through my scalp and I found a few moments' rest in truly fainting from fatigue, fright, and pain.

But it all went. Great heaven! how it went! For Mayo was a great actor, and it was but intense excitement that made him so rough with me. Honestly we were so taken aback behind the scenes that none of us knew what to make of the frantic demonstrations — whether it was just the result of an extreme good nature in a great crowd, or whether we were giving an extremely good performance.

The last act I can never forget. I had cut out two or three pages from the dialogue in the book. I felt there was too much of it. That if *Camille* did not die, her audience would, and had built up a little scene for myself. Never would I have dared do such a thing had it been for more than one performance. That scene took in the crossing of the room to the window, the looking-glass scene, and the return to the bed.

Dear heaven! it's good to be alive sometimes! to feel your fingers upon human hearts, to know a little pressure

hurts, that a little tighter pressure will set tears flowing. It was good, too, when that madly-rushed performance was at last over, to lie back comfortably dead, and hear the sweet music that is made by small gloved hands, violently spatted together. "Yes, it was 'werry' good."

And Mr. Palmer, standing in his box, looking at the pleased, moist-eyed people in front, took up the cue they offered, so promptly that within twenty-four hours I had been engaged to play *Camille* at the Union Square, as one of a cast to be ever proud of, in a handsome production with sufficient rehearsals and correct gowns and plenty of extra ladies and gentlemen to "enter all!" at the fourth act. And more still, the new play that was then in preparation was called in and packed away with mothballs to wait until the old play had had its innings.

Such a cast! Just look at it!

M. Armand Duval.....Mr. Charles R. Thorne
Comte de Varville.....Mr. McKee Rankin
M. Duval (Père).....Mr. John Parselle
M. Gustave.....Mr. Claude Burroughs
M. Gaston.....Mr. Stuart Robson
Mademoiselle Olympe.....Miss Maude Granger
Mademoiselle Nichette.....Miss Kate Claxton
Mademoiselle Nanine.....Miss Kate Holland
Madame Prudence.....Miss Emily Mestayer

If Mr. Palmer ever eats opium or hashish and has beauteous visions, I am sure he will see himself making out those splendid old casts again.

Every theatre-goer knows it's difficult for a stout, romantic actor to make his love reach convincingly all the way round, and it is almost as difficult for an actor who has attained six feet of height to make his love include his entire length of anatomy. But Charles R. Thorne was the most satisfactory over-tall lover I ever saw. He really seemed entirely possessed by the passion of love. "My God Thorne" he was nicknamed because of his per-

sistent use of that exclamation. Of course it did often occur in plays by authority of their authors, but whenever Thorne was nervous, confused, or "rattled," as actors term it, or uncertain of the next line, he would pass his hand across his brow and exclaim, in suppressed tones: "My God!" and delicious creepy chills would go up and down the feminine spine out in the auditorium — the male spine is not so sensitive, you know. A fine actor, hot-tempered, quick to take offence, equally quick to repent his too hasty words; as full of mischief as a monkey, he was greatly beloved by those near to him. I worked with him in perfect amity, albeit I do not think he ever called me anything but *Johnny*, the name Lou James bestowed upon me at Daly's; and his death found me shocked and incredulous as well as grieved. He should have served his admiring public many a year longer, this most admirable *Armand*.

And Mr. Parselle, what a delight his stage presence was. He had unction, jollity, tenderness, dignity, but above all a most polished courtesy. It was worth two dollars to see John Parselle in court dress, and his entrance and salutation as *Duval Père* in the cottage scene of "Camille" was an unfailing gratification to me — he was a dramatic gem of great value.

Mr. Stuart Robson, by expressing a genuine tenderness of sympathy for the dying woman in the last act, amazed and delighted everyone. It had not been suspected that a trained comedian, who hopped about and lisped and squeaked through the other acts, could lay aside those eccentricities and show real gentleness and sincerity in the last — a very memorable *Gaston* was Mr. Stuart Robson.

But oh, how many of these names are cut in marble now! Poor Claude Burroughs! with his big eyes, his water curls, and his tight-waisted coats. We would not have poked so much fun at him, had we known how terrible was the fate approaching him.

And little Katie Holland — she of the knee-reaching

auburn locks, the gentlest of living creatures — God in His wisdom, which finite man may not understand, has taken and held safe, lo! these many years.

As an ex-votary of pleasure, *Prudence* is always more convincing if she can show some remnant of past beauty; so the statuesque regularity of feature the Mestayer family was famous for, told here, and the *Prudence* of Miss Emily Mestayer was as handsome and heartless a harpy as one ever saw.

Then, too, there were the gorgeous Maude Granger, the ruddy-haired Claxton, and the piratically handsome Rankin; their best opportunities were yet to come to all three. And with that cast Mr. Palmer achieved a great success, with the play that, old then, shows to this day the most astounding vitality.

The only drawback was to be found in its impropriety as an entertainment for the ubiquitous "young person," in the immorality of *Camille's* life, which was much dwelt upon. Now — oh, the pity of it! — now *Camille* is, by comparison with modern plays, absolutely staid. It is the adulteries of wives and husbands that the "young person" looks unwinkingly upon to-day. Worse still — the breaking of the Seventh Commandment no longer leads to tragic punishment, as of yore, but the thunders that rolled about Mount Sinai at the promulgation of that awful warning: "Thou shalt not commit adultery!" are answered now by the thunders of laughter that greet the taking in adultery of false wives and husbands in milliners' many-doored rooms, or restaurants' *cabinet particulier*. Alas, that the time should come that this passion for the illicit should so dominate the stage!

One more delightful production at the Union Square Theatre I shared in, and then my regular company days were over.

CHAPTER FORTY-FOURTH

"Miss Multon" Put in Rehearsal — Our Squabble over the Manner of her Death — Great Success of the Play —Mr. Palmer's Pride in it — My *Au Revoir*.

THE other day, in recalling to Mr. Palmer a long list of such successful productions of his as "Led Astray," "The Two Orphans," "Camille," "Miss Multon," "The Danicheffs," "The Celebrated Case," etc., he surprised me by emphatically declaring that the performance of "Miss Multon" came nearer to absolute perfection than had any other play he had ever produced; and to convince me of that, he simply brought forward the cast of the play to help prove the truth of his assertion. As we went over the characters one by one, I was compelled to admit that from the leading part to the smallest servant, I had never seen one of them quite equaled since. Mr. Palmer's pride in this production seemed the more odd at first, because of its slight demands upon the scenic-artist, the carpenter, and upholsterer. It needs just two interior scenes — a busy doctor's study in London and a morning-room in a French country-house — that's all. "But," he will enthusiastically cry, "think of that performance, recall those people," and so, presently, I will obey him and recall them every one.

The play had twice failed in Paris, which was, to say the least, discouraging. When it was read to me I thought the tremendous passion of maternity ought to touch the public heart — others there were, who said no, that sexual love alone could interest the public. Mr. Palmer thought the French play had needed a little brightening; then, too, he declared the people wanted to see the actual end of the heroine (one of Mr. Daly's fixed beliefs,

by the way), therefore he had Mr. Cazauran write two additional short acts — a first, to introduce some brightness in the children's Christmas-tree party and some amusement in the old bachelor doctor and his old maid sister; and a last for the death of *Miss Multon*.

After brief reflection I concluded I would risk it, and then, just by way of encouragement, Mr. Cazauran, who had always been at pains to speak as kindly of my work as that work would allow, when he was critic on the different papers, declared that all my acquired skill and natural power of expressing emotion united would prove useless to me — that *Miss Multon* was to be my Waterloo, and to all anxious or surprised "whys?" sapiently made answer: "No children." His argument was, that not being a mother in reality, I could not be one in imagination.

Always lacking in self-confidence, those words made my heart sink physically, it seemed to me, as well as figuratively; but the ever-ready jest came bravely to the fore to hide my hurt from the public eye, and at next rehearsal I shook my head mournfully and remarked to the little man: "Bad — bad! Miss Cushman must be a very bad *Lady Macbeth* — I don't want to see her!"

"What?" he exclaimed, "Cushman not play *Lady Macbeth* — for heaven's sake, why not?"

"No murderess!" I declared, with an air of authority recognized by those about me as a fair copy of his own. "If Miss Cushman is not a murderess, pray how can she act *Lady Macbeth* — who is?" And the laugh that followed helped a little to scare away the bugaboo his words had raised in my mind.

Then, ridiculous as it may seem to an outsider, the question of dress proved to be a snag, and there was any amount of backing and filling before we could get safely round it.

"What are you going to wear, Miss Morris?" asked Mr. Cazauran one day after rehearsal — and soon we were at it, and the air was thick with black, brown, gray,

purple, red, and blue! I starting out with a gray traveling-dress, for a reason, and Mr. Cazauran instantly and without reason condemned it. He thought a rich purple would be about the thing. Mr. Palmer gave a small contemptuous "Humph"! and I cried out, aghast: "Purple? the color of royalty, of pomp, of power? A governess in a rich purple? Your head would twist clear round, hind side to, with amazement, if you saw a woman crossing from Calais to Dover attired in a royal purple traveling-suit."

Mr. Palmer said: "Nonsense, Cazauran; purple is not appropriate;" and then, "How would blue — dark blue or brown do?" he asked.

"For just a traveling-dress either one would answer perfectly," I answered; "but think of the character I am trying to build up. Why not let me have all the help my gown can give me? My hair is to be gray — white at temples; I have to wear a dress that requires no change in going at once to cars and boat. Now gray or drab is a perfect traveling-gown, but think, too, what it can express — gray hair, white face, gray dress without relief of trimming, does it not suggest the utterly flat, hopeless monotony of the life of a governess in London? Not hunger, not cold, but the very dust and ashes of life? Then, when the woman arrives at the home of her rival and tragedy is looming big on the horizon, I want to wear red."

"Good God!" exclaimed Cazauran; and really red was so utterly unworn at that time that I was forced to buy furniture covering, reps, in order to get the desired color, a few days later.

"Yes, red," I persisted. "Not too bright, not impudent scarlet, but a dull, rich shade that will give out a gleam when the light strikes it; that will have the force of a threat — a menacing color, that white collar, cuffs and black lace shoulder wrap will restrict to governess-like primness, until, with mantle torn aside, she stands a pillar of fire and fury. And at the last I want a night-dress

and a loose robe over it of a hard light blue, that will throw up the ghastly pallor of the face. There — that's what I want to wear, and why I want to wear it."

Mr. Palmer decided that purple was impossible and black too conventional, while the proposed color-scheme of gray, red, and blue seemed reasonable and characteristic. And suddenly that little wretch, Cazauran, laughed as good-naturedly as possible and said he thought so, too, but it did no harm to talk things over, and so we got around that snag, only to see a second one looming up before us in the question of what was to kill *Miss Multon.*

I asked it: "Of what am I to die?"

"Die? how? Why, just die, that's all," replied Cazauran.

"But *of* what?" I persisted; "what kills me? *Miss Multon* at present dies simply that the author may get rid of her. I don't want to be laughed at. We are not in the days of 'Charlotte Temple' — we suffer, but we live. To die of a broken heart is to be guyed, unless there is an aneurism. Now what can *Miss Multon* die from? If I once know that, I'll find out the proper business for the scene."

"Perhaps you'd have some of the men carry knives," sneered Cazauran, "and then she could be stabbed?"

"Oh, no!" I answered; "knives are not necessary for the stabbing of a woman; a few sharp, envenomed words can do that nicely — but we are speaking of death, not wounds; from what is *Miss Multon* to die?"

Then Mr. Palmer made suggestions, and Miss Morris made suggestions, and Mr. Cazauran triumphantly wiped them out of existence. But at last Cazauran himself grudgingly remarked that consumption would do well enough, and Mr. Palmer and I, as with one vengeful voice, cried out, *Camille!* And Cazauran said some things like "Nom de Dieu!" or "Dieu de Dieu!" and I said: "Chassez à droite," but the little man was vexed and would not laugh.

Someone proposed a fever — but I raised the contagion question. Poison was thought of, but that would prevent the summoning of the children from Paris, by *Dr. Osborne*. We parted that day with the question unanswered.

At next rehearsal I still wondered how I was to die, hard or easy, rigid or limp, slow or quick. "Oh," I exclaimed, "I must know whether I am to die in a second or to begin in the first act." And in my own exaggerated, impatient words I found my first hint — "why *not* begin to die in the first act?"

When we again took up the question, I asked, eagerly: "What are those two collapses caused by — the one at the mirror, the other at the school-table with the children?"

"Extreme emotion," I was answered.

"Then," I asked, "why not extreme emotion acting upon a weak heart?"

Mr. Palmer was for the heart trouble from the first — he saw its possibilities, saw that it was new, comparatively speaking at least — I suppose nothing is really new — and decided in its favor; but for some reason the little man Cazauran was piqued, and the result was that he introduced just one single line, that could faintly indicate that *Miss Multon* was a victim of heart disease — in the first act, where, after a violent exclamation from the lady, *Dr. Osborne* said: "Oh, I thought it was your heart again," and on eight words of foundation I was expected to raise a superstructure of symptoms true enough to nature to be readily recognized as indicating heart disease; and yet oh, difficult task! that disease must not be allowed to obtrude itself into first place, nor must it be too poignantly expressed. In brief, we decided I was to show to the public a case of heart disease, ignored by its victim and only recognized among the characters about her by the doctor.

And verily my work was cut out for me. Why, when I went to the Doctors Seguin to be coached, I could not even locate my heart correctly by half a foot. Both father and son did all they could to teach me the full horror of *angina pectoris*, which I would, of course, tone down for

artistic reasons. And to this day tears rise in my eyes when I recall the needless cruelty of the younger Seguin, in running a heart patient up a long flight of stairs, that I might see the gasping of the gray-white mouth for breath, the flare and strain of her waxy nostrils. Then, in remorseful generosity, though heaven knows her coming was no act of mine, I made her a little gift, and as she was slipping the bill inside her well-mended glove, her eye caught the number on its corner, and, she must have been very poor, her tormented and tormenting heart gave a plunge and sent a rush of blood into her face that made her very eyeballs pinken; and then again the clutching fingers, the flaring nostrils, the gasping for air, the pleading look, the frightened eyes! Oh, it is unforgettable! poor soul! poor soul!

Well, having my symptoms gathered together, they yet had to be sorted out, toned down, and adapted to this or that occasion. But at least the work had not been thrown away, for on the first night Dr. Fordyce Barker — a keen dramatic critic, by the way — occupied with a friend a private box. He had rescued me from the hands of the specialists in Paris, and I had at times been his patient. He applauded heartily after the first two acts, but looked rather worried. At the end of the third act a gentleman of his party turned and looked at him inquiringly. The doctor threw up his hands, while shaking his head disconsolately. The friend said: "Why, I'm surprised — I thought Miss Morris suffered from her spine?"

"So she does — so she does," nodded Dr. Barker.

"But," went on the friend, "this thing isn't spine — this looks like heart to me."

"I should say so," responded the doctor. "I knew she wasn't strong — just a thing of nerves and will — but I never saw a sign of heart trouble before. But it's here now, and it's bad; for, by Jove, she can't go through another attack like that and finish this play. Too bad, too bad!"

And his honest sympathy for my new affliction spoiled

his evening right up to the point of discovery that it was all in the play. Then he enjoyed the laugh against himself almost as much as I enjoyed his recognition of my laboriously acquired symptoms.

And now for Mr. Palmer's beloved cast.

With what a mixture of pleasure and grief I recall Sara Jewett, the loveliest woman and the most perfect representative of a French lady of quality I have ever seen in the part of *Mathilde*.

Mr. James O'Neil's success in *Maurice de la Tour* was particularly agreeable to me, because I had earnestly called attention to him some time before he was finally summoned to New York. His fine work in Chicago, where I had first met him, had convinced me that he ought to be here, and that beautiful performance fully justified every claim I had made for him in the first place. The part is a difficult one. Some men rant in it, some are savagely cruel, some cold as stone. O'Neil's *Maurice* bore his wound with a patient dignity that made his one outbreak into hot passion tremendously effective, through force of contrast; while his sympathetic voice gave great value to the last tender words of pardon.

And that ancient couple — that never-to-be-forgotten pair, Mr. Stoddard and Mrs. Wilkins! The latter's husband, belonging to the English bar, had been Sergeant Wilkins, a witty, well-living, popular man, who quite adored his pretty young wife and lavished his entire income upon their ever-open house, so that his sudden taking off left her barely able to pay for a sea of crape — with not a pound left over for a life-preserver or raft of any kind. But on her return to the stage, her knowledge of social amenities, the dignity and aplomb acquired by the experienced hostess, remained with her, in a certain manner, an air of suave and gentle authority, that was invaluable to her in the performance of gentlewomen; while the good-fellowship, the downright jollity of her infectious laugh were the crown of her comedy work. Who can forget the Multon tea-table scene between Mrs. Wil-

kins and Mr. Stoddard. How the audience used to laugh and laugh when, after his accusing snort: "More copperas!" he sat and glared at her pretty protesting face framed in its soft white curls. He was so ludicrously savage I had to coin a name for him; and one night when the house simply would not stop laughing, I remarked: "Oh, doesn't he look like a perfect old Sardonyx?"

"Yes-m!" quickly replied the property boy beside me; "yes-m, that's the very beast he reminds *me* of!"

Certainly, I never expect to find another *Dr. Osborne* so capable of contradicting a savage growl with a tender caress.

Mr. Parselle, as the gentle old Latin scholar, tutor, and acting godfather, was beyond praise. He admitted to me one night, coming out of a brown study, that he believed *Bélin* was a character actually beyond criticism, and that, next to creating it as author, he ranked the honor of acting it; but there spoke the old-school actor who respected his profession.

And those children — were they not charming? That *Sister Jane*, given so sweetly, so sincerely by the daughter of the famous Matilda Heron, who, christened Helène, was known only by the pet name Bijou, in public as well as in private life. And the boy *Paul*, her little brother. Almost, I believe, Mabel Leonard was herself created expressly to play that part. Never did female thing wear male clothes so happily. All the impish perversity, all the wriggling restlessness of the small boy were to be found in the person of the handsome, erratic, little Mabel.

Even the two maids were out of the common, one being played by a clever and very versatile actress, who had been a friend of my old Cleveland days. She came to me out of the laughing merry past, but all pale and sad in trailing black, for death had been robbing her most cruelly. She wished for a New York engagement and astonished me by declaring she would play anything, no matter how small, if only the part gave her a foothold on the New York stage.

I sought Mr. Palmer and talked hard and long for my friend, but he laughed and answered: "An actress as clever as that will be very apt to slight a part of only two scenes."

But I assured him to the contrary; that she would make the most of every line, and the part would be a stepping-stone to bigger things. He granted my prayer, and Louise Sylvester, by her earnestness, her breathless excitement in rushing to and fro, bearing messages, answering bells, and her excellent dancing, raised *Kitty* to a character part, while *Louise*, the smallest of them all, was played with a brisk and bright assurance that made it hard to believe that Helen Vincent had come direct from her convent school to the stage-door — as she had.

A great, great triumph for everyone was that first night of "Miss Multon," and one of the sweetest drops in my own cup was added by the hand of New York's honored and beloved poet, Edmund Clarence Stedman, for, all nested in a basket of sweet violets, came a sonnet from him to me, and though my unworthiness was evident enough, nevertheless I took keenest joy in the beauty of its every line — surely a very sweet and gracious token from one who was secure to one who was still struggling. And now, when years have passed, he has given me another beautiful memory to keep the first one company. I was taking my first steps in the new profession of letters, which seems somewhat uncertain, slow, and introspective, when compared with the swift, decisive, if rather superficial profession of acting, and Mr. Stedman, in a pause from his own giant labor on his great "Anthology," looked at, nay, actually considered, that shivering fledgling thing, my first book, and wrote a letter that spelled for me the word *encouragement*, and being a past-master in the art of subtle flattery, quoted from my own book and set alight a little flame of hope in my heart that is not extinguished yet. So gently kind remain some people who are great. Just as Tomasso Salvini, from the heights of his unquestioned supremacy —

but stay, the line must be drawn somewhere. It would not be kind to go on until my publisher himself cried: "Halt!"

So I shall stop and lock away the pen and paper — lock them hard and fast, because so many charming, so many famous people came within my knowledge in the next few years that the temptation to gossip about them is hard to resist. But to those patient ones, who have listened to this story of a little maid's clamber upward toward the air and sunshine, that God meant for us all, I send greeting, as, between mother and husband, with the inevitable small dog on my knee, I prepare to lock the desk — I pause just to kiss my hands to you and say *Au revoir!*

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